

CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



GIFT OF
Kathryn Kyser

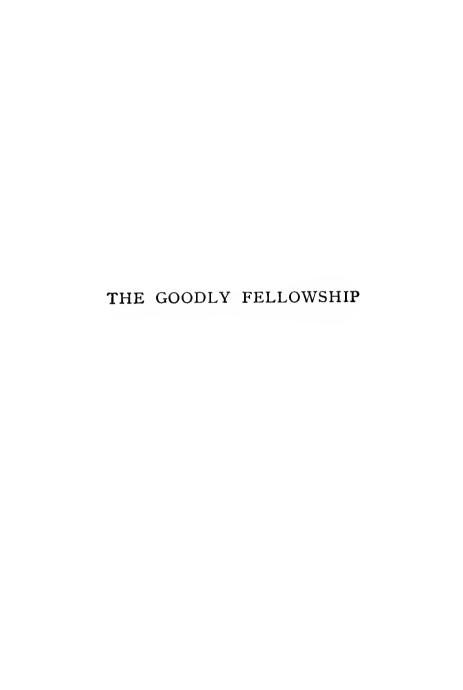
Cornell University Library PS 3537.C49G6

3 1924 021 684 745



The original of this book is in the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in the United States on the use of the text.





THE MACMILLAN COMPANY NEW YORK . BOSTON . CHICAGO

NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO DALLAS • SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., Limited London · Bombay · Calcutta Melbourne

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD. TORONTO

THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP

BY
RACHEL CAPEN SCHAUFFLER

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1913

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT, 1912, By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published May, 1912. Reprinted June, twice, August, 1912; October, December, 1912; August, 1913.

Norwood Bress J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co. Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER						PAGE
I.	ONE AGAINST PERSIA	•	•	•		I
II.	THE BROWN-PAPER MISSIVE .		•	•		7
III.	DELIVERANCE ON A BLACK HORSE		•			12
IV.	A COWARD AND HIS MONEY .			•		17
v.	THE LAWRENCE HOUSE		•			23
VI.	THE INTRODUCTION	•	•	•		30
VII.	THANKSGIVING DINNER	•	•			39
VIII.	Explanations Given	•	•	•		51
IX.	A Box of Perfectos	•				59
X.	TURNING UP A TRUMP		•			67
XĮ.	A LETTER TO AUNT CORDELIA.	•	•	•		76
XII.	THE STATION MEETING			•	•	84
XIII.	WHILE THEY WERE YET SPEAKING	· •		•		93
XIV.	THEIR IDEA OF FUN		•		•	100
XV.	Our Work	•				108
XVI.	THORLEY'S DIGGINGS			•		114
XVII.	THE BEST PLACE IN ALL PERSIA		•	•		123
XVIII.	A DINNER WITHOUT DESSERT .	•	•			129
XIX.	DIPLOMACY			•		140
XX.	WAY FOR THE BLACK SAIB .	•	•	•		147
XXI.	THE TREE		•			153
XXII.	AND STRIFE THEREWITH		•			160
XXIII.	MISS ODDFELLOW'S INSPIRATION					168
XXIV.	MAKING MELODY		•			174
xxv.	An Extraordinary Evening .					181
XXVI.	Another Letter Home		•			188
XVII.	THORLEY SURPRISES HIS FATHER	•	•			194
	vii					

CONTENTS

CHAPTER						PAGE
XXVIII.	POLITENESS DEFERRED			•	•	203
XXIX.	MISS STUART DISPOSES		•			209
XXX.	Among the Prophets					215
XXXI.	EXPLANATIONS ASKED					223
XXXII.	THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY .					232
XXXIII.	Blow on Blow	•				241
XXXIV.	THAT BITTER DAY	•		•		249
XXXV.	Afterward	•	•	•		253
XXXVI.	OUR WORK AGAIN		•	•		258
XXXVII.	Revelations		•	•		265
XXXVIII.	THE LETTER AND MRS. PRESC	COTT	•	•		272
XXXIX.	THE CASTING VOTE			•	•	283
XL.	Jean Stuart joins the Fun	•		•	•	296
XLI.	Woman to Woman	•	•	•	•	303
XLII.	ALL THE DIFFERENCE		•	•		311
XLIII.	JEAN IS READY	•	•	•		316



THE GOODLY FELLOWSHIP

CHAPTER I

ONE AGAINST PERSIA

JEAN STUART, of New York and Bar Harbor, stood in the doorway of the guest-house at Kazu, talking to her Moslem courier. It was before the dawn of a November day; and the early morning in northwestern Persia is neither lighter nor warmer than in New York City. Besides, it was snowing.

Jean Stuart was eager to be off. There was only a short day's journey between her and Muramna. She was tired of being alone in Persia, with but one person to whom she could speak, and he a Persian with an oily voice and disgusting hair which was hidden only in part by an unpleasant green turban. This Hadji Husain, however, was a man of such cleverness that Jean had never really hated him until this moment. Now he was refusing to allow her caravan to start on the journey to Muramna. The reason he gave was the snow. Jean had told him that it made no difference to her. He said they were likely to get lost. She replied:—

"That's nonsense. All you have to do is get a horse or a mule whose home is in Muramna." Then she laughed at him in a way she had already found efficacious. "The trouble is you're afraid to get wet."

She was not answered as usual by his oily smile. He shrugged his shoulders, with the palms of his large hands spread toward her; and his eyes were half shut as he answered sneeringly, "Mashallah!"

A crowd had gathered around the door of the guest-house,

such a crowd as at any hour of the day or night springs up from the ground when a foreigner shows his pale face and strange clothes in an Oriental country. There were old men with streaming blind eyes, women with veils that could not hide the consuming curiosity of their vacant faces, little children from whose condition the gaze of any motherly person instinctively turned aside, only, of course, to return with a pity that cried aloud for something to be done. Jean Stuart, who thought herself more or less a lover of humanity, would have given half her fortune for the power to send that crowd away. They pressed up close around her; they felt of her clothes; they peered into her face; one dirty talon of a finger almost fastened itself into her strangely bright hair.

"Ugh," cried Jean, shrinking back into the doorway and speaking with an appeal in her voice that she had never before used to the Hadji. "Can't you send them away?"

The Hadji turned his back and beckoned to the landlord of the guest-house. Then the two men deliberately walked away for a parley.

The crowd pressed closer around Jean Stuart. Jean, almost frightened, felt for her revolver, and remembering that she had left it under her pillow, went hastily back into the room. The curtain that had formed two walls of her sleeping-chamber was still in its place; behind it on the mud platform raised about six inches from the mud floor, still lay her mattress and her fur-lined sleeping-bag. She lost no time in feeling under the pillow; and it was with a gasp of relief that she picked up the little revolver, apparently untampered with. She was going to make a more thorough examination when behind her she heard a voice saying, in the rich tones of a calm old man,

"Salaam aleikum, Khanum."

She looked up; and there was a patriarch whom she had noticed in the crowd because of his superior cleanliness.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I go Muramna."

The words brought back the color to the cheeks of Jean Stuart.

"Oh!" she cried, "you know English?"

"Yubet," answered the old man, with a placid smile that lit up the kindliness of his eyes.

"Oh," cried the aristocratic Miss Stuart; and she took his wrinkled hand and wrung it before she would let it go.

"Better make hurry," insisted the patriarch. "I take letter; no time for talk."

"You are right," answered Jean, already burrowing among her possessions for the pencil which is so elusive to the properly constituted female. "You don't know Mr. Lawrence?" she went on.

The old man's face broke into a wreathing smile.

"I not know Mr. Lawrence? I not know Dan Saib? In these old arms I held him a baby. Mirza Lawrence, his father, I know all time."

Jean, finding no paper, had torn off the side of a pasteboard box and was writing feverishly. There was a sound of men removing their shoes at the door; and she knew the Hadji was returning.

Hastily she pressed the missive into the old man's hand.

"In God's name be quick," she murmured.

"For Jesus' sake," he whispered reverently.

Then his voice changed to a whine and he was begging alms of her.

The Hadji, who had just entered the room, leaped across and struck the old man a blow that nearly knocked him down.

Jean pointed her revolver at the cruel face. "Do that again," she cried, "and I won't hesitate to fire."

With a hideous leer he answered cringingly, "Just as

Madam says. I thought he trouble you. We start now if you wish; snow stop by and by."

"How many hours' journey is it to Muramna?" Jean

demanded.

"Four — five; in snow, perhaps a little more; six — seven, not longer with our beautiful steeds."

"Have you done what I told you for Lord Chesterton?"

"Oh! he so comfortable! That horse, he love me just like my own brother."

"I will go and see him," answered Jean, with no hopefulness.

She found her horse in a bad condition, though, because of a stone cut on his knee, she herself had cared for him the night before. He had been crowded out of his good place in the stable that was directly under the guest room of the *khan*. The bandages over his sore leg had been kicked off; and he was shivering with pain and cold.

Much work had been done, and the morning was well advanced before Jean Stuart was induced by the now urgent and obsequious Hadji to mount Lord Chesterton and turn her face, as she thought, toward the city of Muramna. Her caravan was not a large one; it consisted of herself, Hadji Husain the courier, and six muleteers who conveyed on their tired animals her personal baggage and the camping outfit she had used on her way through Russia.

Jean, supposing that the city of Muramna lay on a plain, was surprised to find that the road they were taking soon led them up into the foot-hills of a mountain range, which loomed up very high and bleak directly in front of them. She called the Hadji to her and began to ask questions which he answered suavely in an interesting way, full of circumstance and Oriental color. In spite of her dislike of him, when she could get him to talk in this vein, she had to own that he was almost fascinating.

The time passed quickly, although they travelled with deliberation on account of Lord Chesterton's knee. The Hadji became more and more interested in his own remarks. He began to be less discreet in his use of language. At last he ventured on an expression so disgusting that Jean quickly rebuked him. The man threw back his head and laughed.

At the first sound of this ribaldry, anger took possession of Jean Stuart. She turned in the saddle and with a gesture of her whip-hand commanded him to be silent. They were passing a little defile among steep rocks that opened to the right from their upward path. The Hadji with a sudden movement seized Lord Chesterton by the bridle and giving his own horse the spur, swept Jean Stuart into the defile. At a few words of Turkish from their master, the muleteers with their mules closed up the opening of the defile.

Meanwhile, Jean Stuart was wishing she could be as oblivious of the Hadji's English as of his Turkish. There is no need, luckily, to write down what he said. It is enough to know that in her dreams, one pure-minded woman was compelled to hear those words at intervals almost throughout her after-life. She would have given anything if it had been safe to cover her ears; instead she grasped her whip and made sure of her revolver; for there was a menace in the man's eyes that would not be contented long with saying things.

Her silence, she perceived, was goading him to the danger point; yet she could not have spoken to save her life. Presently his hand reached out and rested on her foot; for he had dismounted and was staring up at her with his horrible yellow eyes. The time had come. She presented her revolver at his right shoulder, intending to shoot him through the lung, but not to kill him. Her hand was on the trigger; and he, motionless, was still holding her foot, when she found her voice.

"You know I won't hesitate to kill you," she said. "You

had better come to terms. If you land me safe in Muramna to-night, I give you my check for ten thousand dollars, and my word that it shall be cashed."

"I will have the ten thousand dollars," he answered, "and something sweeter."

Then she fired; but there was no explosion; and as he sprang on her, the revolver dropped from her hand.

CHAPTER II

THE BROWN-PAPER MISSIVE Jalane "I'D rather my shoes had arrived in Persia than this peremptory lady," thought Dan Lawrence as he crossed the Compound from his house to the press building. The snow which had fallen through the night was already melting. though it was only ten o'clock; and the holes in Mr. Lawrence's rubbers exactly matched those in the soles of his American shoes. He ran the last few steps to the press building but took time to scrape the snow off his feet before he went up the outside stairs.

The room which he entered was partly office and partly composing-room. Two or three dark-eved Nestorian printers were setting type at one end.

"May your day be white," said the oldest of them; and Mr. Lawrence replied with a salutation and a smile that creased his ruddy cheeks from the edges of his gold-bowed glasses to the ends of his long brown mustache.

The American man who was sitting at a desk near the window made a sound that resembled a growl but did not even turn his head. He was ploughing with a blue pencil through reams and reams of proof-sheets, his hand moving from right to left with a vigor that almost made havoc of the paper.

Dan went over and stood quietly beside him, a remnant of the smile still lingering in his gray eyes.

"When can you hold up a minute?" he said. "Are you just going to press?"

An unmistakable growl answered him.

"How soon will you be finished?"

"Let me alone, can't you?"

"Not if I have to wait long."

"Half an hour?"

"Not half a minute. You must come to, and read this, at least."

Dan profaned the proof-sheets by laying down on them a pulpy fragment of brown paper with something written on it.

The man at the desk scraped his feet and scowled as he picked up the dirty missive and tried to read it.

"Looks about ready to throw at the schoolroom wall," he remarked. "Better apply to Sammy Whiting." A smile lit up for a second his face which, though young, seemed hardened already into grim lines. He squelched the pulpy mass together in his strong fingers. With his other hand he threw open the window, and by a glance, asked Dan's permission to aim the ball at one of the street dogs, which was lying just under the wall. The indescribable odor of an Oriental city rushed in at the window and mingled with the no less powerful smell which was already in the room. If the three Nestorian workmen had been kept at home for a week or so, printers' ink and turpentine might have been the most odoriferous things left in the room.

"Air feels good," said the man at the desk as he watched the dog chewing hopefully on his missile. The printers were shivering already; and after a glance at them Dan shut the window.

"You'll get air enough to-day," he said, "without starting a strike among your workmen. Come, get those papers out of the way. You're due at Kazu."

"Kazu! What's up? Have the boxes come?"

"No, a lady from America."

"A lady? Who's expecting her?"

"No one here. She's come, that's all. Kasha Abraham brought the news and that billet-doux which you took the liberty of throwing away. It was rather a peremptory request for help, and addressed to me by name "Oh, you know her?"

"I never heard of her, nor Margaret either; but she is alone except for a Moslem courier. He is keeping her there on account of the snow-storm, and of course we must see to her."

"Whv?"

"Oh, hurry up, Thor. Get those things out of the way. I have to be at the Conference in Sergis by twelve o'clock, and we may as well ride along together. You'll take Abdullah the gate-keeper, I suppose. It's no use to get a Christian mixed up in a row with that Moslem. That is, if there should be a row."

At the word row a gleam of pleasure came again into the face of Thorley Prescott. He gathered up his proof-sheets and gave a brief command in Syriac, which brought all three printers hurrying to him from their cases. (A few Orientals under Thorley Prescott had learned the meaning of the word hurry.) Thorley divided up the proof-sheets among them, gave a few brief directions, and with a mutter that was meant for a parting salutation, and a resounding slam of the office door, was off with his friend across the Compound.

Ten minutes later the two Americans were mounted and rode out of the Compound followed by Abdullah, the Moslem gate-keeper. Prescott was on a black stallion that could hardly be persuaded to keep a suitable number of feet on the ground. He curveted and pranced and snorted through the narrow streets in a way that left behind him a lane of frightened foot-passengers. Even the other horses gave way before him. Probably no one enjoyed his progress through the streets of Muramna, except the Fiend himself and his master.

Dan Lawrence and Abdullah, when they reached the city gate, found Prescott tightening the girths of his saddle and feeding his horse a lump of sugar. The Fiend, though the foam still showed around his mouth, was standing quietly, while his master had an aspect of cheerful calmness, which he was far from showing in his office chair.

"Well, it's a great day, Dan. I don't know but the stranded female is doing us a good turn!"

Prescott mounted as he spoke and made the Fiend walk, until Dan on his old gray horse had drawn alongside.

"What you going to do with her when I get her?"

"Margaret and I thought she had better come to us," answered Dan. "Miss Wilcox's room is vacant, you know."

"And you know nothing about her?"

"Nothing."

"Why, Dan, she may be - anything."

"She writes like a lady, and her name is --"

Thorley gave a short laugh. "They say a lady is known by her stationery."

Dan smiled. "You have taken the journey to Muramna yourself, Thorley. Did you ever find hotel stationery in any of the khans?"

"No, but I found a tooth-brush once for the use of the whole establishment. Well, so long, Dan. This brute wants to go, and I better let him out, or we won't get back to-night."

"Do you think you can make it? I rather expected you would have to spend the night."

"Not if I know it. The lady will have to hump herself. Well, so long."

"Just a moment, Thor. Don't take risks with the courier, will you? You know how venomous those fellows can be. If you think there is likely to be any danger, perhaps I had better give up the Conference and go along after all.

It's really my concern, you know, and I wouldn't like to have anything happen to you in my place."

A hearty laugh from Thorley answered him before he had finished speaking; and the next moment the Fiend and his rider were off at a galop.

CHAPTER III

DELIVERANCE ON A BLACK HORSE

A ROAD in Persia is really no road at all. It is merely a track through mud or dust, and a track that is very hard to On this November morning the mud was as deep as mud can be, the stones were even more slippery than usual. and the pitfalls were hidden by three or four inches of snow that had turned into slush. Even a reckless horseman would have been warranted in picking his way with some care. But Thorley Prescott had no regard for anything except to reach the guest-house at Kazu. vant Abdullah, mounted on a slower horse, was obliged to step on more than one kariss. Over these mounds which concealed old waterways, he would leap as quickly as he could, and never without muttering a prayer; for at any moment his horse might plunge into the broken ground up to the knees at least. At their best speed, it was long past noon before they reached the khan.

"You talk to the crowd, Abdullah," said Thorley Prescott, "while I keep the old man busy."

He knocked at the door of the *khan* with the handle of his whip, dismounting, because even he could not hope to get his information without talking for it. There were no signs of a caravan near the guest-house; so he felt sure that his search for the lady was not yet at an end. Meanwhile the crowd had gathered. Abdullah moved among them finding and making acquaintances.

Prescott, receiving no answer to his knock, left the Fiend with his servant and pushed his way into the *khan*. In the empty guest-room he was met at last by the landlord, who

denied all knowledge of the American lady. He called down upon himself the curses of all the prophets if any *Inglesi* had lodged last night in his miserable hovel. He felt himself marked for sorrow that any favor should have been asked him by the venerated Saib, which he could not grant; but his tongue found it impossible to compass a lie, and "by the beard of —"

Prescott, whose eyes had been searching the room, walked over to one corner of the raised mud platform which ran around three sides of the floor, and picked up a tan riding-glove. Turning the wrist back, he found the word *Jouvin*, and the look with which he showed it to the landlord caused the rest of a fluent speech to be lost forever in the labyrinth of a very long and horribly dirty beard.

Abdullah's head appeared nodding in the doorway; and Prescott, stuffing the glove into his pocket, left the landlord without so much as a farewell salutation.

"I have found it all out, Saib," said Abdullah. "Shall I tell you as we ride? There is need of some haste." Prescott's answer was to mount the Fiend. Abdullah pointed the way into a track which led off at an oblique angle from the road to Muramna.

"You are sure they have taken her to the mountains?" asked Prescott.

Abdullah pointed in silence to tracks in the snow. There were traces of a small caravan and especially of one lame horse, differently shod from the others. Prescott nodded, giving the Fiend his head. Abdullah would have entered into explanations; but his master checked him.

"Save your breath till afterwards," he commanded. "How long since they started?"

"At least an hour, Saib. It is thought that the horse of the Khanum had begun to go lame. They call her the Khanum with the Head of the Rising Sun. It should not be difficult to find her." "Humph!" said Prescott. He particularly disliked red hair.

Now the Fiend had a chance to prove himself. Prescott had owned him but a little while and had never ridden him on a long expedition. A more prudent man would have taken another horse. Prescott knew it and actually chuckled as he felt the unfailing strength of the muscles that carried him along. He could easily have distanced Abdullah but even he thought it better to keep within sight of his servant. Very soon the track began to lead uphill, the rocks grew larger, the clay more slippery than ever. Once Abdullah's horse went down on his knees.

Though luckily unhurt, he refused to travel as fast as before. Then Prescott's impatience got the better of him.

"Come as fast as you can, Abdullah," he shouted, for the first time touching his crop to the flank of the Fiend. No second touch was needed. It seemed to Abdullah that the horse and his rider flew up the side of the mountain and vanished into the sky. He pushed on as fast as he could; for it is not pleasant even for a Moslem to ride alone in the mountains of Persia.

Thorley Prescott had ridden alone not more than fifteen minutes when he heard very faintly the sound of a woman's scream. His road just then lay down hill. How he and the Fiend escaped rolling in a heap at the bottom of that hill, is one of the miracles not due to common sense. The screams continued, seeming to come from a defile somewhat higher up and a little off the main road. Thorley began now to urge his horse. His impulse was to shout a reply; but he repressed it, counting on the surprise of his attack to make up for his being single-handed. Suddenly the Fiend, mounting a path which seemed to have no end, swerved around a huge rock; and Prescott saw just below him a crowd of muleteers and a small dark man in a green turban, with his arms around a red-haired, hatless woman whom

he was trying to drag from her horse. The woman was fighting desperately with her whip which one of the muleteers snatched just as Prescott rode up. At the same time her saddle turned and as Prescott dashed down through the crowd of mules and muleteers, she fell to the ground.

The next moment the man with the green turban was jerked into the air, and a rain of blows fell about him, some of which overflowed to the muleteers. A few commands in Turkish sent them back cringing to their loads; for the human beast of burden is brave only when he feels that the upper hand belongs entirely to him. From the man in the green turban also, courage began to ooze. It was not long before he became limp in the hands of his captor. Even his clothes began to give way in that vigorous grasp; and there seemed to be very little left of him, when, with one jerk, Prescott landed him across the pommel of his saddle.

It was high time then, that the rescuer should see what had become of the rescued. But the man who had not feared to tackle unarmed, five of his fellow-men, was afraid to turn in his saddle and look for a lady. He had once seen a woman in a faint, and then he had run away. Now there was nothing for it but to turn his head; and when he had done so, he was ready to fall off his horse with surprise. Mounted on her horse, with her hat neatly perched on her orderly hair, sat a self-possessed young woman loading a shiny little revolver. She turned her head as he looked at her.

"I wish I knew," she said, "when Husain took out those cartridges. It's very embarrassing to fire an empty revolver. But for that, I could have managed nicely. However, since you've come, I shan't need firearms, shall I?" She smiled at him in a way that made Thorley feel that the sunshine was unusually brilliant. He did not notice that she was still so pale that every freckle stood out against her white skin, nor did he see her body shaking ever so little in the saddle.

Now Abdullah rode up on a run which could not have lasted much farther. At Prescott's command he took rope from the loads of the muleteers and wound it around the body of the man in the green turban. Prescott tested the knots before he would let the Hadji be lifted from his saddle bow. Then he gave orders to have him tied on the back of one of the mules, the muleteers helping eagerly and jeering in the face of their late master. This done, he turned to the lady.

"Perhaps we had better ride on," he suggested.

"By all means," she answered.

Prescott led the way, followed by the lady. The six muleteers came next with Abdullah and his whip in energetic charge of the captive Hadji.

CHAPTER IV

A COWARD AND HIS MONEY

While they were still in the mountain passes, there was no chance to do anything but to get over the ground as best they could. The lady might watch the back of her deliverer and speculate as to who he was. She probably did so in the intervals of reflecting on her late danger; but she had no chance to satisfy her curiosity, and strange to say she was not so very curious. It was enough for the present to know that she had some one to take care of her. She was glad that Hadji Husain was behind where she could not see him. She hoped she had looked upon his evil face for the last time. The threats that he had made as she fought with him rang in her ears; and she resolved that Jean Stuart would never again stir a step in the Orient without a good strong American man at her side.

"This one is strong enough," she thought, gazing at the smooth black head in front of her (Thorley had lost his cap as he climbed the mountain), "and I'm sure he's an American. But what in the world is he doing here? He's a gentleman, I think, and he may be a scholar. At any rate, he's every inch a man; but I'll eat my hat if he ever was or ever would be a parson."

Jean Stuart's curiosity was beginning to get the upper hand of fear and fatigue and she was glad when they reached a comparatively level place where they could ride together.

It was no surprise to her, of course, that Prescott should take the first opportunity to begin a conversation. But Prescott had no desire to talk. There was one thing more that had to be done.

17

"Hold up a minute, please," he said. "This is the best place to let the Hadji go."

"I beg your pardon?" she asked so sharply that he stopped the Fiend near her instead of going back to Abdullah.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Do I understand you to speak of letting the Hadji go? Is he to have no punishment? You do not understand, perhaps, that he had already forced me far out of my way, and had told me that he was carrying me off to his stronghold in the mountains. His followers are Kurds, he says; and he explained to me fully what they and he would do with my — my things, and — and — "

"Yes, yes," said Thorley, impatiently. "But what do you want me to do?"

"Can't you take him to Muramna," said she, "and have him punished? Is it for the public safety to let him go?"

Prescott gave a short laugh. "Public safety!" he said. "You're in Persia."

"But is there no way of restraining criminals?"

"The new Governor of Muramna might have him bastinadoed for you. Perhaps you might even get him shot from the mouth of a cannon."

"Oh, mercy!"

"That's what he won't get, if the Governor wants to punish him. If not, there are plenty of excuses for letting him go scot free."

The lady looked at him, aghast. "Then there is nothing to be done but to let that rascal go, after he has frightened me almost to death?"

Prescott shrugged his shoulders. "After all, he didn't hurt you."

Jean Stuart thought she never in all her life had met so unpleasant a man.

"Of course it shall be as you say," she said, drawing her-

self up with an expression and a tone which had seldom failed in their effect.

Thorley Prescott turned away unscathed, "I'll scare him a little more, before I let him go," he remarked with zest. "Listen if you like."

The Hadji was now untied and set on his feet. The muleteers and Abdullah formed a circle around him while Prescott went over and stood near Miss Stuart. The Hadji fell to his knees as Prescott looked at him. With groans and sniffling he began to beg for mercy. Prescott regarded him in perfect silence, so long that Jean Stuart thought she should have to scream. At last the words came like the lash of a whip.

"Get up, Husain."

The man rose quickly.

"You know the new Governor of Muramna?" Husain mumbled something Miss Stuart could not understand.

"Speak English and say 'Sir.' Do you know the new Governor?"

"Oh, sir, have mercy." The man sank again to his knees, then at one stern word tottered to his feet, stuttering abject appeals.

"What do you suppose he would do to you if I gave you

over to him?"

Husain began to cry aloud and to beat his breast.

"Last week a man died under the bastinado for speak-

ing unpleasantly to an Englishman."

"It is a woman, sir," said Husain with sudden cheerfulness, and an indescribably belittling jerk of his thumb toward Miss Stuart.

"So much the worse. This is what we Americans do to a man who attacks a woman."

Prescott put his hands around the Hadji's neck and let him feel how easy it would be to choke him. The Hadji's eyes started out of their sockets and his legs crumpled under him. Prescott quietly held him up by the throat until a voice from behind said, "Oh, let him go, or I shall faint." Then he dropped him as if he had been a hot potato. Husain, with his tongue hanging out, called Allah to witness that not one hair of the Khanum's head had been injured.

"That's lucky for you," growled Prescott, standing over the wretch in such an attitude that he fell on his face writh-

ing.

"Get up, you coward, and be as much of a man as you can." Prescott's foot moved as he spoke. Husain yelped but got up in a hurry.

"Now," said Prescott, "would you like to be caught again disturbing any one that belongs to us? Do you care to feel my hands around your neck or my whip on your back?"

The feelings of the Hadji could be expressed only in a flood of Turkish.

"You see how we are able to defend ourselves. You might have fought me to-day seven to one."

"Ah sir, I am no coward. Your valor was as the valor of Rustem, and you had a gun."

"I had nothing but a riding whip, and that I have a great mind to use again on you."

"Oh no, sir!" grovelling before him. "I am a delicate man, sir, I cannot bear it."

"Hold your tongue. One 'Sir' is enough in a sentence."

Turning to the muleteers, Prescott spoke to them in Turkish. They seemed to assent, but when he spoke again, they looked frightened and shook their heads. He asked them another question and they rose with a suppressed shout, and began to adjust their loads.

"Husain," said Prescott, "I have decided to let you off this time without the whipping. Start at once and go toward Kazu. But remember this, that the Christian God, though a God of great patience, does not give to any of His children more than a certain amount of it. Every bit of my patience has now been spent on you. If ever I hear of your hanging about our premises or bullying any one connected with us, foreigner or native, I will whip you with my own hands till the blood runs. Now go!"

The Hadji rushed toward his horse; but the muleteers interfered, all talking at once, and laying hold of him as he tried to slip away. Prescott appointed two of them to act as guards while he questioned the others. After talking to them, he went over to Miss Stuart.

"The muleteers say that the Hadji owes them wages," he said.

"Yes, I paid him fifteen tomans a day for everything; and he was to give them two tomans apiece."

"How many days have you been travelling with him?"

"Since the River Aras; six days counting to-day."

"Have you paid him for to-day?"

"Thirty tomans. He demanded double wages on account of the snow."

Prescott, after a moment's calculation, turned to the Hadji.

"Husain," he said, "you have forty-eight tomans belonging to these men, and fifteen tomans which you extorted this morning from the lady. Of course you have robbed her all along. We'll let that go because she agreed to it; but the sixty-three tomans you must give me."

Husain, with tears, protested that he had no money, that he would be reduced to beggary, that his wives and his little children would perish, that before Allah—.

Prescott cut him short with a question to the men. They assented eagerly, with looks of secret joy among themselves. Husain argued in Turkish with much rolling of his eyes and such gestures as his captors would permit. This question of money made a different man of him, shrewder, less ab-

ject, with a touch of vindictiveness that amounted almost to courage.

Prescott turned again to Miss Stuart. "He says the men were to have only one toman."

"He agreed with me for two. I made him sign a contract. Do you want it?" She produced it without waiting for an answer.

Prescott held it up before the Hadji.

"Now Husain, you will give me sixty-three tomans or you will go with me to the Governor."

There was no more delay. Husain, with lamentations that threw doubt on the sincerity of his earlier efforts, produced the sixty-three tomans. Then Prescott ordered the men to free him. Husain rushed over to Miss Stuart, and trying to grasp her feet, burst into a flood of entreaty. In her efforts to avoid his touch Miss Stuart almost lost her seat. Prescott leaped at his collar, flung him violently to the ground, and stood over him with a face that would have turned a braver heart cold.

"You damned scoundrel," he cried. "Get out, now, quick! Or —"

With one pull he brought the Hadji to his feet again, raising his whip to strike. One terrible blow, one wild shriek, and the rascal was running toward his horse.

"Let him go," cried Prescott. "To your saddles, every one of you. He who first gets to the city gate shall have an extra toman."

"Saib, the Khanum," cried Abdullah, and Prescott turned just in time to keep Miss Stuart from falling off her horse.

"Confound it," he muttered, holding her uncomfortably against the horse while Abdullah went for water. "Why can't a woman have the sense to enjoy a row?"

Jean Stuart opened her eyes and pulled at the pommel to get herself back into the saddle. "Because she is never the hero of it," she said, with the life in her gray eyes contradicting the pallor of her face.

CHAPTER V

THE LAWRENCE HOUSE

THORLEY PRESCOTT ordered that men and animals be fed before they resumed the journey; but he would not allow them to wait for food to be cooked. He himself saw to it that Miss Stuart made a sufficient meal. She took his anxiety for granted; but she would have been surprised if she had known its chief motive. "Next time she might really faint," thought Prescott, and he saw with relief as he helped her remount, that there was color in her cheeks. He did not ride with her at first, for he wanted to impress it upon the muleteers that they would have to hurry. Already it was growing dark; and in spite of his personal recklessness Thorley Prescott knew as well as any one that the Muramna highway after sunset was no place for an American woman: nor, indeed, for any one except a bandit. Besides, the later they reached the city gate, the less chance there would be of getting it opened.

Meanwhile curiosity had a chance to grow in the mind of Jean Stuart. As soon as Thorley dropped behind the muleteers she made a sign that she wished to speak with him.

"I suppose we are on the way to Muramna?" she said.

"That's what you want, isn't it?" he answered.

"Muramna has always been my destination," she replied. Amusement sprang full-armed into his eves. "I wonder

why," he demanded.

"Not half as much as I wonder who you are and how you happened to come riding to my rescue at exactly the right moment."

"Why, Dan Lawrence sent me, of course."

"Oh!"

There was a brief silence. Then she began again.

"You are staying in Muramna, perhaps, with Mr. Lawrence?"

"I live there."

"Oh — Is there anything to do?"

"You might ask Dan when you see him. He'll have a job planned for you by this time, probably."

"For me?"

One merry little sound escaped her, more provoking than a laugh, more refined than a chuckle. Thorley Prescott wondered how she made it and began scheming to have her do it again.

"Suppose you tell me your name," he said.

"Before you have mentioned your own?"

"Oh, mine is Samuel Thorley Prescott — at your service," he added, very much to his own surprise putting up his hand to take off his cap and make her a salute.

A laugh more in tune than the usual chime of bells rang out in the twilight. Then she begged his pardon, for his look of surprise had been succeeded by one of dismay.

"My best and only head-covering," he explained. "Well, it's up to Dan; he has three."

"I should say it was up to me," she ventured.

To her surprise he laughed heartily.

"So it is. Only this morning I had hopes that you were the boxes from America."

"Then there are no hats to be bought in Muramna?" she asked.

"Well, hardly."

Another silence fell.

Curiosity was now aflame in the mind of Jean Stuart; but before she could frame another question, Thorley Prescott spoke.

"You didn't tell me your name, after all."

"Oh, I am Jean Stuart. Didn't Mr. Lawrence tell you?"
"He showed me your letter; but I don't know how much

of it he could read himself. I couldn't make anything of it—but a ball which I threw at a dog."

"I'm afraid you're a case for the S. P. C. A."

"Oh no, it was a very slushy ball, and the dog knew I meant it for a joke. But you'll be a case, if you ride that lame horse any longer."

"I know it," she said with great distress. "I feel it all through me every time he limps. But what can I do?"

"The Fiend wouldn't let you stay on his back."

"Oh, yes, he would. But you're heavier for poor Lord Chesterton than I am."

Prescott sprang from the Fiend's back, ordered the muleteers to go on, helped Miss Stuart to dismount, and changed the saddles without paying any attention to protests from her. Then he held his hand for her to mount, saying, "Come, I shall think you're afraid."

She forgot she was tired; and for several minutes the Fiend forgot too; but her hand on the snaffle was light and strong; and it was nearly ten hours since the Fiend had left his stable. So presently he was jogging along again behind the muleteers. Thorley Prescott, leading the lame Lord Chesterton, walked the rest of the way to Murampa.

At least two hours longer they plodded over that miserable excuse for a road. The muleteers lit one or two lanterns, which sometimes brought to light a pitfall when it was too late to avoid it. It had grown cold enough to freeze just the surface of the slush; and the horses' feet crunched through at every step. As for Prescott, he took no pains not to splash; and the spark or two of interest which he had begun to feel in the stranger died a muddy death. Their journey seemed all the more endless because the lights of Muramna had appeared for so long to be very near them.

Jean Stuart, not yet fully used to the Persian atmosphere, was tantalized again and again. The effort it cost her to sit upright in her saddle was very great. More than once she caught herself falling into a doze. When at last the muleteers stopped and the Fiend halted of his own accord, she could not believe that it meant anything but another vexatious delay. Only the voice of Thorley Prescott shouting to the keeper of the city gate convinced her that this at last was Murampa.

And now there was another vexatious delay. It is no easy thing to enter an Oriental city after nightfall. Thorley Prescott would have been wiser if he had supplied the keeper of the gate with a few inducements before he had left for Kazu that morning. What arguments he now used, he never told; but his father noticed later that Thorley withdrew his order for a new suit, which was to have been sent from America.

Now they began to pick their way through the crooked, narrow streets of the city. The going there was little better than outside the walls. Their horses were liable to step on sleeping street dogs. The widely-separated, rough cobblestones, slippery with mud, were even more treacherous than the quagmires of the highway, and the high walls on each side seemed to make the darkness tangible. For the first time, since she had seen the last of Hadji Husain, Jean Stuart felt terrified. It occurred to her now that she had no idea where she was going.

"Mr. Prescott," she cried; and a grim voice answered her from below in the darkness, "Well?"

"I hope the hotel is better than those awful khans. You will speak to the proprietor, won't you?"

"The hotel?"

"Yes. You are going to see that I get there safely, aren't you? You're not going to leave me until I am under a roof?"

"Wasn't planning to. What Muramna hotels were starred in your Baedecker?"

"Oh well, even if it is uncomfortable, it will be a place to sleep in. What is the name of the best hotel?"

"The Lawrence House."

"How very American! Who keeps it?"

Then Thorley Prescott laughed. Jean Stuart felt a vexation that grew into anger when he said, "Do you know anything about Persia?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"You aren't really expecting to find a hotel in Muramna?"

"You spoke about the Lawrence House yourself."

"Mrs. Lawrence has invited you to her home."

"But she doesn't know me. Why should she invite me? I can't possibly accept. I shall go to whatever place is open to travellers, no matter how poor it is."

"Oh, very well. Shall I call an electric cab?"

Jean Stuart could not trust herself to speak; and there was silence for several minutes. Then they reached a street a trifle cleaner and more level than the others. A substantial wall loomed up before them, with a building inside that looked very tall. Lights could be seen from the upper window of another building farther in. The muleteers stopped; and Prescott rode among them to rap with the butt of his whip at the gate and to cry, "Issachar! Shimoon! Hilgar! Whoever you are, wake up!"

Some one had evidently been watching, for the gate was opened without delay.

"Oh Dan, is it you? How'd you get here so soon?" cried Thorley.

"I've been watching in your office. Have you got her?"

"Yes, here she is. Miss Stuart, this is Mr. Lawrence, — proprietor of the Lawrence House," he added in a lower tone.

"Mr. Lawrence," said Jean, offering her hand, and was

going on to speak incoherently of "embarrassment" and "hospitality" and "your wife" and a "nuisance." But Dan would have none of it.

"Let me lead your horse," he said. "You must be tired to death. My wife is looking forward to your coming, with the greatest interest. I hope you have brought the latest fashion papers."

The tone was so friendly and commonplace that Jean Stuart could not think of herself as an intruder. It was only a few steps farther to the open door of a house, which she forgot to measure with the eye of a woman who had all her life owned more houses than she could live in. And now the figure of a lady appeared in the doorway, and a cheery voice rang out into the darkness.

"Is Miss Stuart there? Oh, I am so glad!"

The lady ran down the steps, took Jean by the elbow, then feeling that she could scarcely stand, slipped an arm around her waist and helped her into the house.

"Are you able to go right upstairs?" she asked. "Dan will send your things and I really think you'd be more comfortable in bed. Besides I've had water heated and I guess a bath in a tub will feel pretty good."

"Good!" cried Miss Stuart, sitting down on the bottom step of the stairs. "Just give me a minute, won't you? I've been praying for the shelter of a Persian hotel, and here I wake up to find myself in an American heaven!"

There came from a doorway at Miss Stuart's right the sound of a mellow laugh. She raised her heavy eyelids and saw an old man regarding her with a benignity which made her love him on the spot. He stood quietly watchful, stroking his long white beard. After his laugh, he paused before he said, still very gently, but with a strength of tone that made the words sink even into the tired mind of Jean Stuart:—

"Ah, Margaret, our new young friend has seen already

that you and Dan and the little ones know how to make our home indeed a 'Foretaste.'"

"A foretaste of what?" asked Jean Stuart sleepily, getting up as Margaret Lawrence pulled helpfully at her arm.

Dr. Lawrence's face, which with his last words had grown serious and even a little wistful, broke again into a most lovable smile. To Jean his answer was so mysterious that her mind refused at the time to puzzle over it.

"Of our Real Home," he answered.

CHAPTER VI

THE INTRODUCTION

MISS STUART slept without waking for at least ten hours. When at last she opened her eyes, she saw at the foot of her bed a quaint little face framed in fine brown hair and supported by an active figure in a plaid dress. As the stranger's eyes opened, the little face crinkled up into a smile and a little voice said, —

"My mother sent me to come in very quitely and see if you want your breakfast yet. She says you are not to get up on any account."

Miss Stuart, laughing softly, raised herself on one elbow. "Come here, you darling mite," she said, "and tell me how old you are and what your name is."

The child went around the bed and offered her hand gravely. "My name is Ruth Lawrence, and I'm nine years old. Danny is only seven. But if you are awake, I must go and tell Mamma. Would you like me to come back and plump your pillows?"

"Very much, dear heart; and tell your mother I hope I am awake, but it seems too good to be true."

"I don't know what you mean," said Ruth, soberly, "but Mamma will prob'ly; she most always does know what people mean, even Uncle Thor."

"So do I," announced another voice from behind the door. "She means she's so glad to be here that she hopes she isn't dreaming. I don't think that's much of a joke."

The merriest kind of laugh rippled out from the bed. "Is that Danny?" cried Miss Stuart. "Make him come in."

As she spoke, there popped into the doorway a pair of shining gray eyes with a small, thin child attached. "Good morning!" said a cheerful voice. Ruth went over to him, saying in a reproachful undertone,—

"Mamma said you were not to come in."

"Well she asked me. Mamma wouldn't want me to be unpolite."

Ruth, with a righteous air of having done her own duty and some of her brother's as well, went her way; while Danny advanced to the bedside, tugging at a gold chain that was festooned across the front of his blouse. A large gold watch presently popped out from a pocket that was a little too small; and Danny exclaimed triumphantly:—

"See! Uncle Thor lent me his gold watch and chain. I can wear it to Thanksgiving dinner at Aunt Kate's. Won't Sammy Whiting be mad, though! Uncle Thor says he's a brat. What is a brat?"

"I never answer questions until my teeth are brushed." She lay back on her pillows smiling at him; and he stared at her. The large eyes travelled thoughtfully over every inch of her face and the full lips moistened each other with a hearty relish before they gave the verdict.

"Well, I think you look pretty nice if your hair is red; and you aren't so very homely either. Uncle Thor told Papa that Mrs. Whiting would consider you a very plain woman. I think your looks are the kind that brighten things up a good deal; but it's harder to tell before your face is washed. I b'lieve I'd rather have you to teach us than Miss Wilcox. Uncle Thor said you didn't know enough. But I'd rather have a niggerent teacher than one that purses her mouth. Miss Wilcox does, this way." Miss Stuart's smile broke into a chuckle. "And whatever you are," concluded the judge, "I don't b'lieve you could be pursy!"

For the first time in a year, Miss Stuart gave herself up to

whole-souled merriment. The child pranced about, well pleased with himself and her — too well pleased.

"Tell me," she said, willing to divert his mind, and resolving after this to laugh only in the proper places, "Tell me who was it that lent you the watch, and why did he do it?"

"Uncle Thorley Prescott — the one that found you. He came in while we were at breakfast this morning. He seemed in a very good mood. Often he's pretty cross. To-day he tossed me up to the ceiling and bumped my head quite hard; and because I didn't cry hardly at all but said it would be better if the ceiling was higher, he took out his watch and said I could wear it to school. But I said I didn't need to be rewarded for being hurt and besides there isn't any school, because of Thanksgiving; so he said, would I do him the honor to wear it on this occasion because of his respect for me and to help him give thanks that he was a sochated with three genrations of perfect gentlemen. What is a genration? I think it meant Papa and Grandpa 'cause they both looked red an' pleased. But maybe it was only to hear Uncle Thor say so much. They think he doesn't talk enough, and Mamma thinks so 'specially. Once I heard them say that he gets out of the habit at home; and Papa said, 'It's no wonder.' I asked why; but they said, 'Never mind.' So I began watching, and I guess it's because Mrs. Prescott talks so much herself. She does talk a lot!"

"Don't you enjoy hearing her?"

"Well, not so very much. She seems to jaw a good deal. Nobody jaws in this house; but Sammy Whiting's mother does. That's where I learned the word; but Mamma says it isn't a very good one. I don't see why, when it means what you mean and no other word does. Well, here's Mamma now with your breakfast. Shall I open the door?"

"Please do," said Jean, still chuckling, her hands going apprehensively to her erring hair. "Good morning," she

cried, "your son has been so entertaining that I haven't even washed my face."

"She ast me to come in; so of course I hat to," said Danny, virtuously.

"Well, you may go to Grandpa now. We'll speak about that later," said his mother, with a smile for her guest.

"I have to come in and plump the pillows because I said I would," announced Ruth, setting down the little coffeepot she was carrying.

"Never mind that, dear," said Jean, "I can do them myself."

"Well, I know you can," said Ruth, plumping with the greatest energy, "but it isn't every day that we have a lady come clear from America. Gentlemen come sometimes; but hardly ever ladies, bercept missionaries. You aren't a missionary, are you?"

"No, dear."

"And you aren't going to be?"

"Heaven forbid," thought Jean; but she only smiled and shook her head.

"Come Ruth," said Mrs. Lawrence, "we won't stay any longer now. I'll be back later," she added, "and see that you have all you want."

"Please don't trouble about me," said Miss Stuart. "I have made you too much work already; and everything smells delicious." She made a face of delight at Ruth, whose face crinkled until her eyes looked like the thinnest kind of half moons turned upside down. She kept her head turned toward the stranger, as she followed her mother from the room, her eyes saying unmistakably that she would far rather stay.

"Oh, Mrs. Lawrence," called Jean, "my breakfast will taste lots better, if Ruth is with me. I suppose I mustn't ask for Danny, too."

Mrs. Lawrence's eyes twinkled; but she shook her head.

"Ruth may stay," she said, "if you'll send her out the moment she is in the way."

"On those conditions, you may never get her back," laughed Miss Stuart. "Now you can tell me all about everything," she added in a confidential tone that made Ruth squirm with delight. "You know it was dark when I came last night, and I have no idea what this house looks like on the outside, nor how many people live in it, nor who your neighbors are, nor anything."

"We-e-e-l-l," said Ruth, elated but not overwhelmed by her new importance, "Well, where shall I begin?" The child could not help feeling a little glad that Danny had put himself out of the running. "If he was here," she thought, "I wouldn't have a chance to tell much of anything. But of course I'm sorry he was naughty, and besides I told him not to come in."

"Suppose I tell you first what I know," said Miss Stuart, "and then you'll know just how 'niggerent' I am. In this house live," she closed her lips so that something not quite like a dimple showed at each of the corners, and her eyes laughed as she began to count on her fingers, "your mother," that was the forefinger, "your father," middle finger, "a young lady named Ruth." The child's face crinkled up again more than ever, as she gazed at the shining ring that was on the very tall ladylike finger that stood for her. Only the little finger remained for Danny. She guessed he wouldn't have liked that.

"And nobody for the thumb?" asked Miss Stuart.

"Yes, Grandpa; but he's as tall as Papa."

"I remember! I saw him last night. He's the dear old gentleman with the white beard — And is he a missionary?"

"Oh my, yes! He's been one for ever-unever-unever—I guess most to Amen."

"And he lives with you all the time? Isn't there any Grandma?"

"No, no other relations bercept in America. When we came back to Persia, there was nineteen to see us off at the steamer."

"Then who are Uncle Thorley and Aunt Kate?"

"We-e-e-l-l, they're pertend relations. To keep off homesickness, Mamma says. There's Aunt Kate and Uncle Harry,—Uncle Giant we call him sometimes, 'cause he's so big and has a beard that sticks out just like in Jack the Giant-Killer. Their other name is Franklin."

"And they are missionaries?"

"Oh my, yes! Uncle Harry is a doctor and he has a hospital out at the College, and has to cure so many sick people that Aunt Kate says he doesn't know how to eat any more. But he's promised to chew a great deal at Thanksgiving—that's to-day—'cause Harriet says she won't chew 'nless he does."

"Is Harriet his little girl?"

"Yes, and so is Edith, only she's bigger and she'll have to go home next year. She cries every time anybody talks about it; but Edward doesn't. He's dying to go home. He says he's read every decent book in the Station at least three times; but Tom's written him that there's no time to read books when you go to college. I heard Edward read the letter to Uncle Thorley, and Uncle Thorley laughed and said there was a good deal in it. But at College here they all read books like everything. Uncle Thorley can't get 'em printed fast enough; and sometimes Grandpa has to stay up nights to help him."

Jean Stuart had been sitting up in bed waiting for a chance to get in a word. It was one of her principles never to interrupt a child for her own pleasure. Now Ruth was obliged to stop for breath, so Jean seized upon the instant.

"You don't mean to tell me," she said, "that your Uncle Thorley has anything to do with missionary work?"

"Why, yes! He pays the workmen and he makes books

in Syriac and he writes a paper called *The Light of the World* and he trains horses for everybody that can't train their own and he can talk to Kurds better than anybody else bercept Mr. Freyer; and *he* can't talk half as fierce as Uncle Thorley, so it doesn't sound like a Kurd atall."

"Oh-h-h-h! — This Uncle Thorley, then, is not the same as the Mr. Prescott that came and found me?"

"Why yes. Of course he's the same. There's only one Uncle Thorley. He has a father; but he's just Mr. Prescott. And Mrs. Prescott isn't like an aunt atall. Even Uncle Thorley just calls her Mrs., like anybody else, and he's related to her, but she isn't his real mother. I wish Danny was here," Ruth finished, looking about her helplessly. "He can 'splain all those hard things."

"Oh, can he?" said Jean Stuart mischievously. "Then I'll get him to 'splain Uncle Thorley. Are there any more Prescotts?"

"No, but Mrs. Prescott is praying for Uncle Thorley to get a sooterable helpmate. (That's the praying word for wife, you know.) So I s'pose he'll get one pretty soon. But once when she prayed it, he got up and went out of the room. What do you s'pose God thought of that?"

Jean Stuart was lying back on her pillows and wiping her eyes.

"I don't know," she said. "Does Danny?"

Ruth was dreadfully shocked. "Oh, no," she said. "Danny can't 'splain God. He's only a little boy. Even Grandpa doesn't know all about Him, nor Miss Oddfellow either, and she's most as old as Grandpa — an' just as good!"

There came a knock at the door, which Ruth opened, admitting her mother.

"Well," said Mrs. Lawrence, "have you had any chance to eat?"

"I never ate a meal that tasted so good," Jean declared.

"I shall remember it all my life. This is what I call luxury."

A shadow passed over Mrs. Lawrence's face, as her guest brought out the last word.

"Oh no," she said. "Please don't think we're luxurious."

"What do you call it, then?" laughed Miss Stuart. "Night before last I was glad to have a rubber blanket between me and the mud floor; and the breakfast I tried to eat! Ugh!"

"Oh well, of course, when you've just come off the journey, most anything clean seems nice. But you won't write that word home to your church, will you? At least not until you've lived here a whole winter?"

"Lived here a whole winter!" cried Jean Stuart, with a start that made a castanet of every dish on the tray. Mrs. Lawrence and Ruth caught it, as it was sliding to the floor.

"You aren't expecting to go back across the mountains at this time of year?"

"No, but I'm going on around the world by the southern route. You'll help me find a maid, won't you? And your husband surely knows a reliable courier. I must have an American, at least not an Oriental."

Mrs. Lawrence smiled, in a way that slightly irritated her guest. "Suppose we discuss all that later," she said. "It's time I was getting the children ready for the little English service which is a luxury, if you please. I knew you were too tired to go, so I wouldn't speak of it before. But would you feel able to go out later to the College? It's three miles away, just outside the city walls. The Hospital is there too; and Mrs. Franklin, the wife of our doctor, is giving the dinner at two o'clock. We'd all love to have you with us."

"But why should Mrs. Franklin ask me to her dinner?

You are all too good. I'll do just what will cause you the least inconvenience."

"Oh," cried Mrs. Lawrence, "do you realize what it is to see some one from America when it's seven years more until your furlough comes again? Why, one look at your sleeves is worth a whole week of Thanksgiving dinners!"

CHAPTER VII

THANKSGIVING DINNER

MISS JEAN STUART of New York and Bar Harbor chuckled more than once, in a way which the word chuckle is not fine enough to describe. She was getting ready to dine in the middle of the day with sixteen missionaries and their nine children, and she could find in her trunks no gown with sleeves adequate to the occasion. She wished she had not countermanded that last order of hers in Paris. realized that it was months since she had taken such an interest in her clothes. The gown she finally chose was black, like all the others she was wearing; but it was a kind of black she had not intended to put on until a little later. She was ready before the Lawrences came home from the service, which they had said would be held at the Girls' Seminary: but her fur-lined coat was warm, so rather than linger in the little sitting-room which she had found on going through Dr. Lawrence's doorway, she opened the front door and stepped out into the golden sunshine. air felt as if it would soon be time to pick violets. driveway in front of the house was as bare as if yesterday's snow had fallen in a dream. Patches of scanty grass were still green; and in garden beds on either side of the Lawrence steps were chrysanthemum stalks with a few blossoms which had escaped being picked for the Thanksgiving centerpiece.

Jean Stuart turned for a look at the house to which fate had brought her. It was three stories high, built of bricks of dried mud, but in a substantial way that made it look very different from the Persian houses she had seen. The roof was flat, and a railing at the edge showed it was often in use. The Lawrence house was between two other houses very much like it and built on a common foundation. They could not be called ugly, for they gave an impression of simple comfort; but even a real estate agent would have hesitated to describe them as commodious, much less palatial.

Jean turned, and her eye followed the driveway to the gate. The wall was there as she remembered it, very high, but not one bit too high, she thought, shuddering a little. Near it was a building larger than all three houses. She thought Dan Lawrence must have been waiting there when they had arrived last night, and she remembered he had spoken of waiting in his friend's office.

"I'll wager he likes training horses," she thought, "better than editing The Light of the World. I suppose that's a religious paper. Oh, my eye! He's no more fitted to write for it than I am; but maybe he only stands over the printers while they set up the type. I guess he could make most anything work, if he wanted to. I wonder if 'God could 'splain' his being a missionary. Jeanie, if you sit next him at dinner to-day, I dare you to ask him."

A little sound of amusement broke from her as she picked up her skirts and went to peep around the corner of the houses. Several groups of people were just coming down the steps of the large building at the other end of the Compound.

"Oh my!" she said, "the missionaries have finished their luxury. If they consider a church service the chief luxury of Thanksgiving Day, what will the dinner be like? Well, I ate enough for breakfast anyway; and I'm not likely to write to my church."

Out of the nearest group, a tall, slender girl with light hair and earnest eyes, ran back to find Margaret Lawrence, who was lingering in the doorway of Faith Seminary.

"Is that Miss Stuart?" demanded the girl in a penetrating

whisper. "Isn't she stunning? And that hat is absolutely the newest thing I've seen since I left New York. Would you dare ask her if it came from Paris?"

Mrs. Lawrence laughed. "Get Ruth to ask, if you must know," she said. "Miss Stuart has fascinated both the children, and I believe she'd tell them what she might not let out to us."

"Has she vouchsafed to explain how she happened to be stranded at Kazu with only a Moslem courier?"

The voice was the voice of Miss Wilhelmina Trench, who had not left behind her in Boston her hereditary ideas of propriety.

"If she happens to be one of the Jonathan Stuarts," said another voice that was kindly as well as brusque, "she'll never explain anything. Her family don't have to."

A snort from behind them made more than one of the ladies jump.

"If I am not very much mistaken," said a magisterial voice, "this ambiguous young person will explain herself to us all, before the day is over, unless," the speaker's hand went up to adjust her eye-glasses and succeeded in making them sit even more crookedly on her very inconvenient nose, "unless her conduct should prove to be inexplicable. I very much regret," she added, "that any Missionary should consider this a moment for expatiating on the stranger's hat." Mrs. Prescott, whose enunciation of the word Missionary showed that she spelled it always with a capital, fixed her august regard on the spot where the earnest-eyed Amy Lea had stood; but the girl had managed to slip away and was at that very moment watching that newest of hats, as its owner took her place in the Lawrence buckboard.

"If she finds out that I've been here less than a year," thought Amy, "she'll know that this dress wasn't the latest fashion even then. Oh well, I suppose a real missionary wouldn't mind."

But perhaps more than one real missionary did mind a little bit. Mrs. Whiting's first thought was of Sammy's shoes, which really were a disgrace; and Jane's dress was scandalously short; but Caroline in her embroidered white lawn would look sweet enough to make up for anything. She did wish George wouldn't persist in making that dreadfully old-fashioned bow; but there were things you could not teach a husband, no matter how faithfully you kept at him.

At the dinner table Miss Stuart found herself in the seat of honor between Dr. Franklin and Thorley Prescott. The quaintest of elderly ladies, in a costume that suggested the days of the Civil War, sat opposite her and nodded benignantly when she was introduced as Miss Oddfellow, Principal of Faith Seminary. Jean Stuart found it hard to take her eyes from the little lady, until she espied through a wide archway another dinner table where nine children were quietly sitting. A question was just coming off her tongue, when Prescott cleared his throat and she discovered that every head was bowed but his and her own. In a moment Dr. Lawrence was "asking a blessing."

Jean Stuart did not trust herself to speak until every one else had begun. She had to chat a little with her host before there was a chance to address Thorley Prescott. Then she murmured:—

"Thank you for another rescue. What would have happened, if I had talked out loud?"

"Don't be too sure that nothing will happen now. You kept your eyes open."

"Oh, was that wrong? I see I'll have to get you to tell me lots of things."

"Me!" Thorley Prescott gave his shortest, most disagreeable laugh.

"Yes, you. It's a pity if one black sheep can't stand by another."

"Oh, they've talked about me already, have they?"

"Do you suppose I would allow any one else to call you names in my hearing? If my eyes were open, what about yours?"

He laughed with a different ring this time.

Miss Oddfellow was speaking across the table. "I venture to say, Miss Stuart, that in your home muskmelons are hardly palatable at Thanksgiving."

"You are right, Miss Oddfellow," said Jean, with the deference which had won her so many elderly friends, "and this melon is the most delicious I ever ate. How do you manage to keep them?"

"It is due to our dry climate," said Miss Oddfellow, much gratified. "Even grapes can be kept until March."

"But here is what delights us more than all the melons in Persia," said Dr. Franklin, as the servant placed before Miss Stuart a plate of milky soup with one small oyster floating in it. "Where did you get 'em, my dear?" he called to his wife.

"Mrs. Lawrence's father sent them out last summer," returned Mrs. Franklin, beaming at him from her end of the table. Then with a little turn of the head, she made the radiance fall on Jean Stuart. "And you see," she added, "that for a long time a welcome has been provided for our guest because the can held exactly twenty-six oysters."

"Had it held but twenty-five, Mrs. Franklin, I am sure you and Mrs. Lawrence are perfectly capable of creating an oyster if it is necessary for the comfort of a guest. I shall drink to you in this broth. Here's to the hospitality of Muramna. May it never grow less, for greater it could not be!"

She raised her spoon to her lips, smiling at Mrs. Franklin and Mrs. Lawrence, who sat next to each other.

"Let us make that a rising toast," said a little man who sat at Mrs. Franklin's right.

A young fellow on the same side of the table jumped to his feet.

"Good plan!" he cried. "You and I will click plates, Mr. Freyer. No such cracker-jack dinners to be gotten in our little mountain home, eh?"

"These gentlemen, Mr. Freyer and young Mr. Standish," explained Miss Oddfellow, "are stationed in the Mountains. Their departure has been delayed this autumn; so Muramna has the pleasure of entertaining them."

"What are you doing, Papa?" called an astonished voice from the smaller table, as Mr. Freyer and young Standish actually clicked their soup plates together, after which Standish capped the climax by drinking from his.

"Oh, Mary," said her father, "you should be participating in this toast."

"Indeed she should not," shouted Dr. Franklin. "Mary belongs to us and I'll bet she helped make the soup. She stays with us because her father couldn't possibly keep her in the Kurdish Mountains. I don't know what my Edith would do without her," he added to Miss Stuart.

Now the doctor's man strutted into the room bearing a turkey on an immense platter. He was followed by a Nestorian maid with a smaller bird which she took to the children's table.

"I thought all the turkeys had fallen down the well," announced Dr. Franklin. "How did you manage to resurrect this monster? Well, if that isn't cranberry sauce! In the name of the Prophet Figs, where did that come from?"

Mrs. Whiting bridled.

"Why do you give us away, Doctor?" said Thorley Prescott. "Miss Stuart sees nothing singular — unless it's soup with one oyster."

"If she stops with us as long as we hope she will," said Dr. Lawrence, who sat opposite Thorley, "Miss Stuart will find that we do not fare sumptuously every day." During this speech, Dr. Franklin had performed his whole duty of laughing at Thorley's joke; but he was, after all, less concerned with the talk of his neighbors than with the origin of the cranberry sauce.

"My dear," he shouted, "if you don't tell me about these cranberries, I'll give you the best piece of turkey on the platter."

"Good for you, Pa," called Edward from the other room. "Give it to her anyway."

"What are you doing, my son?" asked the doctor, craning his neck to look at the boy, who, brandishing a smaller knife over a smaller turkey, was in every look and gesture an image of his father.

"Following your example, sir," he replied, with a flourish of his knife that nearly sent the bird off its platter.

"Careful, sonny," smiled his mother. "I told him he might try to carve, Harry, and he does pretty well when no one is looking. The cranberries are from Mrs. Whiting. You must ask her how they came and thank her for giving them all to this dinner."

"I do indeed thank Mrs. Whiting," said the doctor, bowing to the lady who sat not far away, between Dr. Lawrence and Roger Standish. Miss Stuart also smiled across the table as she helped herself to a little piece of the jelly. She hated to eat her full share of these delicacies, though they tasted so good.

"How did you ever get it here, Mrs. Whiting?" she said, realizing in a flash that this was the person who would consider her very plain. "Your muleteers must have been different from mine." There was mischief in the smile with which she finished.

Mrs. Whiting, looking radiant, hastily revised her first opinion of the stranger, as she said, "My mother packed the jars carefully in a small trunk; and Mr. Standish was kind enough to bring it out." She smiled brightly at the young

man who was talking with Miss Lea and missed both the compliment and the smile.

"Either your mother or Mr. Standish is a genius," said Miss Stuart. Standish looked up suddenly and wished he had been paying attention. "My things were all shaken into jelly, but not such jelly as this."

While Mrs. Whiting, leaning happily across the table toward her husband gave "George" the benefit of this remark, Thorley Prescott said to Miss Stuart:—

"Your supply of taffy, though brittle, has stood the journey remarkably well. Isn't it lucky?"

"I don't wonder you are envious."

"Envious?"

"You ought to be, if you are not. I have yet to hear you make one pleasant remark." The look she gave him robbed her words of sting; and he laughed more heartily than she had yet heard him.

Dr. Franklin determined to find out for himself what this stranger was that she could make Thorley Prescott laugh, at a Station dinner. He himself was soon laughing to his heart's content; and the fun was such that it extended down the other side of the table as far as Amy Lea; but Thorley Prescott took no further part in it. His right-hand neighbor, Miss Wilhelmina Trench of Boston, after one look at his face, decided that it was not her duty to become the butt of his ill humor; so she turned back to George Whiting with a half smile on her face that made George's wife decide to tell her that lavendar was a color which should not be worn between thirty and sixty.

After a story of Jean Stuart's had made mention of Central Park, Miss Oddfellow, with eagerness in her thin old voice begged pardon, but was it possible that in the immensity of the metropolis Miss Stuart might be acquainted with Dr. Von Barnhelm, the famous archæologist and traveller.

Oh yes, Miss Stuart had met him often.

Dr. Franklin was getting more and more bewildered. Mrs. Prescott had told him before dinner that her stepson had found the stranger positively illiterate.

"You knew him socially, I suppose," he said, "not because you are interested in archæology?"

"Well, I have yet to see a cuneiform inscription more interesting than the personality of Mr. Von Barnhelm."

Thorley Prescott's voice broke in,-

"I suppose it was he who told you about the hotels of Muramna."

"Hotels nothing!" said Dr. Franklin. "He stayed at the Lawrence's."

To Thorley's intense surprise the little sound which was not a chuckle became audible, though smothered by Miss Stuart's lips.

"Was it from Von Barnhelm that you heard of us?" asked Dr. Franklin. "What do you say, Thorley, shall we write him a round-robin of thanks?"

"Better not," said Miss Stuart. "I didn't see him after he came back from here. Had I been able to get his advice, my journey would have been less dangerous, though perhaps not so interesting."

Dr. Franklin was on the point of asking another question, when Miss Oddfellow took up her theme.

"Dr. Von Barnhelm is a very agreeable man," she said, "and full of delightful information."

"Ha, ha," laughed the doctor in a way that made the whole table stop to listen. "He didn't look very learned when he got here in the middle of a blizzard with his face cracked open by the snow and his silk hat tied to the pommel of his saddle. Ha, ha,—ha, ha,—nor after he had been plucked by that native barber, eh, Mrs. Lawrence?"

"No doubt he is more full of information now than when he first came among us," admitted Dr. Lawrence, with his charming smile. "He was on his way to Behistun where he spent two days and a night on that narrow ledge under the sculptures. It was a daring act, and justified only by the importance of the discoveries he made. We Americans may well be proud of him."

"He knows more than any man I ever saw." It was young Roger Standish who spoke. "I studied Syriac under him at the University, and in summer school he teaches Old English. I tell you he's a cracker-jack. I wish I could ask him about this seal I got in the Mountains." He touched his breast pocket as he spoke and leaned forward. "You've seen it, Dr. Lawrence. How about you, Dr. Franklin?"

"I'd like to," said the doctor.

Standish, with a glance at Mrs. Franklin, went around the table and handed the seal to Dr. Franklin. The doctor looked at it and shook his head. He passed it to Miss Stuart, who examined it carefully and said it was very interesting. Then Miss Oddfellow produced a small magnifying-glass and went thoroughly into the matter, discussing the engraving, point by point, with her left-hand neighbor, Dr. Lawrence. She had an idea that the seal was of the Sassanian period; but Dr. Lawrence thought it was older than that, probably Achæmenian. Standish was questioned as to where he had found it, and while he was telling what he knew, the stone passed from hand to hand until it had gone around the table and reached Thorley Prescott. Standish had just finished his account and the whole company was quiet, when Prescott held the stone out to Miss Stuart, saying:—

"I suppose you know all about it."

Every one heard him, and no one could help waiting to hear what Miss Stuart would answer. She took the seal and looked at it again, closely.

Margaret Lawrence at her end of the table tried to be polite and started a conversation; but even Mrs. Franklin would not help her keep it up. Now Miss Stuart borrowed Miss Oddfellow's magnifying-glass and scrutinized the stone. Mrs. Franklin kept her shining eyes on Thorley Prescott's face; but every other eye was on Miss Stuart. At last she handed the glass to Miss Oddfellow, and placing the seal in Thorley's hand, said casually.—

"There is a stone very much like this in the British Museum. Professor Arnold calls that Sassanian. This is a far more perfect specimen and does not look as old; but the head dress, which Professor Arnold considers the determining point, is identical in both."

A little murmur of applause went round the table. Miss Oddfellow's plain old face beamed with pride, not at the justification of her own idea, but because the whole Station had been set right by the intelligence of a woman. Miss Oddfellow had been herself a favorite pupil of Mary Lyon.

Then Thorley Prescott disgraced himself. Without heat, but with great decision, he remarked,—

"I do hate an intellectual woman."

Every one gasped, excepting Miss Stuart. No one could think of anything to say. Mrs. Franklin's cheeks flushed as she continued to gaze at Thorley; and the men all glared at him as if they would like him to know the reason why. Only the stranger guest remained perfectly at her ease. She spoke at once, but without any hurry.

"Oh, then you would agree with Jane Austen." Her air of impersonal interest was belied only by her dancing eyes, and she looked straight into the dogged face of Thorley Prescott.

As she looked, his expression changed; and it was almost with eagerness that he asked, —

"How so?"

"Jane Austen says, you remember, that if a woman knows anything, it should be the effort of her life to conceal it."

There was a storm of laughter. Roger Standish, followed by one or two others, went so far as to clap his hands, Thorley Prescott looked around at his colleagues with a triumphant smile that surprised them almost into silence. Then Miss Stuart turned demurely to her host.

"Do you know," she said, "I believe this is strawberry ice cream. Have you kept these strawberries since June, or is Persia a tropical country after all? I'm sure I always thought so, until I was caught in that snow-storm."

CHAPTER VIII

EXPLANATIONS GIVEN

It was getting dark. The children had said their "pieces" and played their "pieces." Roger Standish had done his "stunts," which were received with great applause because they were full of last winter's slang, being therefore of thrilling interest to his eager but benighted colleagues. Then, because Thorley Prescott could make the most noise without hurting the very infirm old piano, he played with unusual geniality for a final game of "Going to Jerusalem," after which there began to be talk of hats and coats.

Jean Stuart was approached by a square little lady with very bright eyes, abnormally smooth hair, and a voice that was brusque but not unkindly. This was Dr. Flora MacColl, the woman physician.

"You're to spend the night with me," said the little lady, "so get your things and come along; for I have to make rounds before tea. Yes, Margaret Lawrence knows it. She and the children are staying at Stella Whiting's."

"Isn't anybody going back to the city?" asked Jean.

"Only the men, and they shouldn't; but, poor things, a taste of danger is their only social excitement."

"Dangerous to go back to the city now? Why, it's hardly dark. What harm could come to five or six men riding together?"

"Get your things and come along," laughed the doctor. "I see my evening's work is cut out for me."

The doctor's rooms were adjacent to the Woman's Hospital. Jean found them bare, though not devoid of interest.

There was a beautiful old rug on the mud floor of the sitting-room. One or two good engravings emphasized the whiteness of the high walls. Books and magazines were scattered about. The New York Tribune for October twentieth, lay just under the lamp; and Jean fell upon it very much as Sammy Whiting had fallen on the drumstick of the turkey. But even the advertisements made her homesick; and she looked about presently for something that would help her swallow the lump in her throat. In an obscure corner she found a cheap little book-case of reddish wood, that had been fitted with awkward glass doors. It was partly filled with old books in leather bindings. Jean Stuart opened the book-case and drew out a book at random. Then she plumped herself down on the bare floor, and pulling out volume after volume, forgot everything else in the world.

A laugh from the doorway roused her.

"Aha," cried the doctor's voice. "I thought I could trust you to find 'em. Nice old fellows, aren't they?"

"The best of company," Jean agreed. "But you'd better lock them up until I leave Muramna. Here's a volume I've been hunting from London to San Francisco." She held up a thin little book bound in green Morocco.

"What'll you give me for it?" asked the doctor laughingly.

"Anything you want," said Jean. "My agent at Christie's almost got it for me; but at the last minute he let an English Earl outbid him. He'll never buy for me again."

"And you would have paid more than the Earl?"

"Of course I would. He got it for only fifty-one pounds."

"Fifty-one pounds! Good gracious, it isn't worth all that?"

"Of course it is."

"But it's just an odd volume."

"'Compleat Angler,' First Edition, and it fills out my set. Oh, well, I suppose I can live without it."

"Are any of these other books worth as much as that?" The doctor spoke with awe, and as if she were not very well pleased.

"I haven't looked at them carefully and I'm not an expert; but if they were mine and any one offered me three thousand dollars for the collection I'd laugh in his face."

"Well, they're not for sale," snapped the doctor.

Jean flushed and began putting back the volumes, as if they burned her fingers.

"I beg your pardon," she said, rising haughtily. "I understood you to ask about their value."

"Tut, tut," said the doctor. "It's myself I'm disgruntled at. Come and help me get tea."

"Now, my dear," said Dr. MacColl, when they had eaten their frugal supper, "let me give you a piece of advice."

"Must you?" said Jean. "Shall I like it better than Mrs. Prescott's?"

"How rude she was, to be sure," admitted the doctor, "and I didn't blame you for refusing to satisfy her. Just the same it would have been better to put your pride in your pocket and explain yourself a little. After all, though we live out of the world, we have our traditions. The fact, for instance, that your grandfather was Jonathan Stuart, would go a long way with Willie Trench."

"But how do you know?" cried Jean, opening her eyes very wide.

"The Stuart features, my dear."

Dr. MacColl went over to her desk and picked up an old daguerrotype. Jean turned it until the light fell on two stiff young men standing side by side, one tall and distinguished, the other short and square.

"My father," said Dr. MacColl, "and your grandfather. Nice, isn't it?"

Jean put her hands on the little doctor's shoulders. "That makes me feel at home," she said.

Dr. MacColl patted the slender fingers. "And now," she demanded briskly, "I have just one question to ask you. Where was your Aunt Cordelia when you started off on this wild-goose chase?"

Jean threw back her head with a laugh so musical that the doctor had to join.

"By great good luck, my Aunt was on the other side of the Atlantic. If she had been with me, I should have had to bring her along, and I doubt whether she would have liked the Hadji."

The doctor spoke now very soberly. "I shall take the liberty of writing Mrs. Craven to assure her of your safety and to promise that we'll look after you. It makes me shudder to think of the danger you were in."

"Do you suppose I liked it? You need promise nothing in my behalf. I shall be cautious enough after this; and I will not have my Aunt disturbed by a highly colored account of my adventures."

The doctor chuckled. "Not much room for coloring matter in a page of typewriting. Did your cousin Mary live to grow up?"

They talked for some time about the Stuart family. Jean Stuart, it seemed, was now alone in the world, except for one great-aunt, who was married but had no children living. Her father had died some time before. Her one sister, Delia, had outlived him only a few years; and Delia's little girl, Mary, whom Jean had loved more than all the rest of the world, had died of croup, not more than two months ago. When the news reached her, Jean had been in Paris, and instead of feeling moved to go home, she had determined to start at once for some place that should be perfectly new and strange. It happened that she was with her friends, Professor Arnold and his wife; and they had begged her to share their journey around the world.

So far Jean's story had been fragmentary. A fact here

and there had led the doctor to infer more than she was told. Jean's expression as she spoke of the child's death made it impossible to ask why the two that loved each other so well, had been separated at the end. The doctor saw clearly that great bitterness was mingled with Jean's sorrow and that nothing could be said now to comfort her.

"Well," she inquired briskly, "what became of the Arnolds? You started out with 'em?"

"Yes," said Jean, "and while I was with them everything was perfect. We had with us a Greek courier named Anastasi and his French wife Rosalie. They made us perfectly comfortable and knew their business so thoroughly that we had no alarms about anything. But when we reached Tiflis, Mrs. Arnold found a telegram from home, which made her determine not to go farther. It was about one of the children; and she fell into such a state of mind that her husband could not allow her to return alone nor with me."

"Why didn't you go back with 'em?"

"Well, I know it was silly; but I was fascinated by the Orient. While I was seeing all those new things, I began to forget a little, and at night I was so tired that I had to sleep. Rosalie was so nice and trustworthy, she was almost like a friend, and as for Anastasi, we all swore by him. Mr. Arnold had no hesitation in leaving me with them. You know I'm not a youngster, and I've taken care of myself for ever so long."

"Hm," said the doctor, "you're still in your twenties, aren't you?"

Jean nodded. "Twenty-eight."

"I thought so. And your looks are—well, noticeable, to say the least."

"Thank you," said Jean. "Mrs. Whiting, I am told, would think me very plain."

"Don't interrupt your story. What happened next?"
"Everything went splendidly until we reached the River

Aras. We travelled by caravan and made our own camp at night, instead of stifling in those horrible *khans*. It was all perfectly delightful."

"Rather cold, I should say, for one of your tender habits."

"I'm not so very tender. Camping has been my chief delight, since I was a youngster."

"Well, go on, go on."

Jean Stuart smilingly regarded the little doctor. "Why don't I snub you," she wondered, "as I did that gorgonheaded Mrs. Prescott?"

"You don't dare," said the doctor. "How many times must I tell you to go on?"

"Well, when we reached the River Aras, Anastasi got into a fuss with the Custom House officials."

"Of course," said the doctor.

"That's what I thought, and it didn't bother me at all. Even when Anastasi explained that it would delay us an extra night, I went to bed in perfect confidence and woke to find myself alone in the middle of Asia."

"Humph," said Dr. MacColl.

"Rosalie had left an elaborate note explaining that her husband had met his most ruthless enemy, that he was obliged to flee in the night, that he could not take Mademoiselle with him because his going would then have been discovered, that he considered it a risk to take his wife, but that she insisted, though desolated to leave Mademoiselle; 'but it may well be,' the note remarked, 'that if he take leave of me now, I may never see him again.'"

"She was right there," said the doctor.

"Rosalie went on to say that they would commend me to trust myself unreservedly to the bearer of the note, who was an experienced person, very friendly to the country, and of the strictest integrity and faithfulness. This person turned out to be Hadji Husain. Well, what was I to do? It was almost as far to turn back as to press on. I had no reason

to think it more dangerous. Hadji Husain assured me he would bring me safely to Muramna; and the long and short of it was that I hated to turn back. How foolish was I?"

"Your foolishness had come earlier in the day. I wish I could get that Mr. Arnold within reach of my tongue! Well, as it's turned out, there's no harm done. But it's only another illustration of the old proverb."

"The one about Providence watching over fools?" asked Iean.

"When did the fellow first begin to frighten you?"

"Not until yesterday morning at Kazu. I had been spending the nights at *khans*, you see, because it seemed a little more prudent."

"Humph!" repeated the doctor.

"I had risen early, expecting to reach Muramna that night; and when I found that the Hadji would not move because of the snow, I spoke to him in a way that he resented. He snarled at me and was so impertinent that I was awfully frightened. We were at the door of the khan, and of course there was a crowd. I looked at every face, hoping against hope for the sight of a European. Then I remembered that in rushing out to see why Hadji was not getting the horses out from under me in the stable, I had forgotten my revolver. The old man Kasha Abraham followed me în, as you know. I'm told he's a Christian pastor. Mr. Lawrence says he is not to have a money reward. Is that fair to the good old soul?"

"We'll have to see. You knew Dan in America?"

"No, but I once heard him preach. It was in Shiloh, Connecticut, two or three years ago. It wasn't an eloquent sermon. In fact my friends found it rather dull."

"But you liked it?"

"I liked him. I liked the way he spoke of his life. He gave the impression of having found something that suited him. It happened that I had been playing a game with

myself of looking for a contented person. In all my search I found no other, and after a while I began to doubt whether he would seem so contented, if I could see him in his own environment, pestered with all the little things that are too much for the rest of us. I suppose you think me awfully silly; but really it was partly curiosity that drew me on, for Mr. Lawrence had intimated that all his colleagues were just as much taken up with life as he was. I thought I'd like to see what this kind of work is that will satisfy a human soul."

"You shall see it to your heart's content," cried the doctor. "To-morrow morning I'll take you round the Hospital."

"No, no," protested Jean, "that's just what I can't bear. I hate to see people suffer."

"And yet you want to look on at missionary work?" The doctor smiled sadly. "Oh well, we'll have you doing it before long, and that's the part that contents us."

"Me doing missionary work!" Jean held up both her hands, and her eyes danced. "Besides, I won't stay here long enough. I'd rather go away, after all, before I've seen that the Lawrences are just like other people."

"Well," said the doctor, "if you can find any safe way to leave Muramna before spring, I'll give you that Compleat Angler to take home with you."

"Done!" cried Jean. "I'll stake all my four volumes against your one. And I'll just have to write my Aunt Cordelia," she chuckled, "that I hadn't been in Muramna twenty-four hours before I was making a bet with one of my missionary friends!"

CHAPTER IX

A BOX OF PERFECTOS

THAT evening, at a later hour than their wives would have liked, or indeed allowed, the gentlemen of the Station, excepting Mr. Frever, who had staved at the College, were making themselves comfortable in the Lawrences' sitting-room. The scene was one that faintly suggested dissipation; for Dan Lawrence had brought out the Sparklet bottle (one of the fruits of his last furlough) and was busily concocting a pale pink beverage which, as there are no lemons in Persia, was neither circus lemonade — nor anything stronger. Lawrence sat with his usual stateliness in his armchair by the round table; but the other gentlemen were disposed in easy attitudes around the room; and Dr. Franklin had taken out the old pipe which he loved to finger in his hours of ease, though he had almost given up using it in any other way. The tobacco he was able to get on the Mission field was not as soothing to his nerves as the blend he had smoked in the days when he had the largest practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and he was now heard again to complain that even "the filthy weed" was not what it used to be.

"Better be thankful that you feel so," said George Whiting righteously. "A missionary has no business to be a smoker." George had promised Stella, when they were engaged, to give up smoking; but it is likely that if they had made their home in America, his would have been one of the promises that are allowed to lapse after marriage.

"I don't know about that," said Dr. Franklin. "Sometimes I think we'd get on better with the Moslem grandees,

if we smoked with them as the diplomats do. It's contrary to the policy of the Mission, I know; but in my opinion, we should not eschew habits which would naturally bring us nearer to the people among whom we live."

"If the habit is wrong?" said George Whiting fervently. Dr. Franklin shrugged his shoulders. "'And who shall arbitrate?" he murmured; for the doctor's favorite poet was the great Apostle of the Imperfect, "when even our wives disagree on this great question." Aloud he added, "Well, it may be a damaging admission; but if I were confronted with a Perfecto, you'd see me falling from grace so fast that you wouldn't know when I bumped."

Thorley Prescott, who had been reading an August copy of the *Literary Digest*, suddenly thumped the fore legs of his straight chair on the floor and left the room. He could be heard going upstairs two steps at a time and slamming the door that led across a little gangway from Dan's study to his own in the next house. Before the subject of conversation had been changed in the sitting-room, he had come back with a wooden box, which he held out to the doctor, saying,—

"Here's your Perfecto, sir."

"Holy smoke, Thor! Those look like the real thing." The doctor incredulously pinched three or four of the cigars. "Yellow ribbons and gold bands and a smell that carries me back to Milwaukee. Anybody left you a fortune?"

"Take one," said Thorley, moving the box impatiently. The other missionaries, wide-eyed, gathered in a circle around the doctor, except the two Lawrences, who went on quietly with what they were doing.

The doctor, still with an air of scepticism, chose a cigar, and sniffed it carefully before he cut off the end. Then, sitting upright in his chair, he scratched a match on his trousers, applied it, and took the first whiff. An expression of unqualified bliss overspread his face as he

sank back into his chair. He pushed Thorley gently away with his foot and said, —

"Don't talk to me now, boy. Don't tell me where you got 'em. It's too good to be true; but while it lasts, I'll just pretend."

With that, he shut his eyes, half opening them once in a while to watch the rings of smoke.

"That cigar has brought down its victim. Anybody else going to fall from grace?" With a quizzical look, Thorley passed the box to his father. John Prescott, who though he stooped, was taller than his son, looked down at him with a tolerant expression in his blue eyes.

"It's a saving of good cigars to pass them to me," he said, smiling behind his gray whiskers.

"Did you ever smoke, Mr. Prescott?" asked Roger Standish.

"Enough so I don't care about repeating the first symptoms," replied the older man.

"First symptoms, nothing," said Dr. Franklin without removing his cigar. "This weed couldn't upset a baby. Try it, Prescott; you'll sleep better for it."

The older Prescott turned away with the same quiet smile. Roger Standish was rude enough to mutter, "He might sleep for one night, but after that —"

There was this excuse for Roger that he wanted one of those cigars more, it seemed to him at the moment, than he had ever wanted anything else. The aroma brought back the few occasions in his life, when, after a real dinner, a box of real cigars had been passed. He had worked his way through College and the Seminary; but it had cost him less effort to earn the extra money for tobacco than to give it up at last, after more than one scolding from his doctor. Now he was approached by Prescott with the brown box; and though he had resolved not to do any such thing, his hand went out automatically. Dr. Franklin was oblivious.

George Whiting's lip curled; for he had more than once overheard Standish freeing his mind on the perennial subject of Thorley Prescott's black pipe and its bad influence on the native pastors and the college boys. Standish had taken a cigar and was feeling for his knife, when Dan Lawrence stepped up behind him.

"Will it pay for the bother of leaving off again?" he said in a tone casual enough not to draw attention. Standish turned and looked into the kind eyes.

"If anybody else had said that to me," he muttered, "I'd have smoked like a chimney all the evening. Much obliged. Just take it, will you? I don't want Whiting to see me put it back."

Now Thorley Prescott had finished his rounds. He placed the box near Dr. Franklin and went back to his corner, where, with his chair tilted against the wall, he resumed his reading.

"Won't you smoke, Thor?" asked Dan Lawrence, wondering a little what his wife would say when she smelled her sitting-room in the morning.

"Thank you," said Thorley. He took out his notorious black pipe, filled it from a leather pouch shiny with age, settled his feet more comfortably on the rounds of his chair, and struck a match. The doctor had just been wakened from his reverie by burning his fingers, so he threw away his cigar end, and not noticing the box at his elbow, looked around for the dispenser of bounty. There was Thorley in a cloud of acrid smoke that was gaining the victory already over the fragrance in the doctor's corner. The doctor sprang from his chair.

"Well, Thor," he cried. "Has anything affected your mind or have you only lost your senses from smoking that abominable Mixture?"

"Nothing ails me, I guess," answered Thorley, "but vulgarity. The rest of the box is yours, Doctor."

"What! Am I the only sinner? With such a temptation, too? Come, Thor, what's the matter with you?"

He came and stood in front of the young man, clasping his hands behind him under his coat-tails, and peering out, for some time, from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. Thorley, scowling at the *Literary Digest*, continued to smoke his pipe. At last the doctor threw back his head with the laugh that had once brought down a ceiling.

"Ha! Ha! ha, ha, hmmm," he finished, subsiding into a chuckle. "These cigars are too intellectual for you, are they? They suit me down to the ground and so does the lady. What inspired her to bring 'em? She may smoke; but I'll bet she doesn't smoke cigars. Ha, Ha, — ha, ha!"

Thorley Prescott's face was a dark red. He thumped his chair furiously to the floor and rose as if to leave the room.

Dr. Franklin, towering above him by several inches, put a heavy hand on the broad shoulder. "No offence, Thorley," he said heartily. "I only hate to send up the smoke that you have earned. And she did bowl you over at dinner about as neatly as any lady could!" The doctor ventured a milder laugh in which, after a second, Thorley Prescott joined him. This was the signal for a general shout.

"Who is Miss Stuart, anyway?" asked Roger Standish, when he could make himself heard.

"Yes, does anybody know?" demanded George Whiting. "She appears to have a great talent for evading questions," ventured Mr. Prescott.

"That seems to me a very good sign," said Dan Lawrence. "If she had anything to conceal, she would have invented some story to set our minds at rest. Margaret thinks her very much of a lady; and the children have taken to her wonderfully. As for the cigars, she got them for her courier and asked Margaret to dispose of them because she disliked the odor among her things."

The doctor burst out laughing again.

"An appropriate commission for Mistress Margaret," he shouted. "I must speak to her about dispensing cigars."

Dan smiled and did not reveal the measures he had taken to secure the box for his friend.

"Say, Prescott," blurted out Standish with the effort which was always necessary when he addressed his taciturn colleague. "How was it about that courier, anyhow? What did happen when you found Miss Stuart?"

"Nothing much," said Prescott.

"What did he do?"

"Knuckled under."

"Did he run away?" pursued Standish.

"When he got a chance."

"Wasn't there more than one man with her?" asked George Whiting. "Abdullah talks as if he had defeated an army."

"She had muleteers, of course; but you know what cattle

"You kept them, I suppose, until you reached the Compound?"

This question came from Dr. Franklin.

"Of course."

"Did you have any trouble with them?"

"No."

"Why didn't you bring in the courier, too?" asked George Whiting.

"What would you have done with him?"

"Had he deserved punishment?"

Thorley smiled. "Ask the 'Khanum with the Head of the Rising Sun.'"

"I heard her discoursing on that point," said Dr. Lawrence, beaming at Thorley over his glasses. "She was eloquent enough when it came to describing her rescue. 'Deliverance on a Black Horse,' she called you."

Thorley growled and returned to the Literary Digest.

"But she was still bewildered," continued Dr. Lawrence, "because you let the rascal go without punishment. She seems to fear that he will seek revenge."

Thorley growled again.

"I suppose she thinks it would have made him amiable, if I had got the Governor to cut off his ears."

"Will he harbor a grudge, do you think?" asked Mr. Prescott, beginning to look anxiously at his son.

"Why shouldn't he?" said Thorley with a slight movement of his shoulders.

More questions would have been asked; but Dan Lawrence insisted on filling up all the glasses from the Sparklet bottle, and he called for a rising toast to Deliverance on a Black Horse, after which it was mildly suggested that they had better go to bed. Dr. Franklin yawned prodigiously.

"Come along, fellows," he said. "It's to-morrow; and if we should stay up any longer, somebody would be talking refugees, which you know was forbidden only for Thanksgiving Day."

A shadow settled down over the face of every man present, and there was no more light talk or laughter as they went their ways to bed.

When he had made his guests comfortable for the night, Dan Lawrence, seeing a light still burning in Thorley Prescott's den, went across the gangway and found his neighbor alone.

"Thor," he said, "there is danger from the Hadji."

"Well," admitted Prescott, "I was fool enough to make him give back some money that didn't belong to him."

"You made him give back money?"

"Fifteen tomans excess which he had extorted from Miss Stuart that morning — he had really been robbing her right along — and the forty-eight tomans owing to the muleteers. He hadn't paid them a chahi."

"Was that quite prudent? You could have allowed the muleteers to take their own money and let the rest go."

"I was red-hot at the man; and it was impossible to whip him properly before her."

Dan whistled. "It's a pity you couldn't have sent her ahead, if it came to that. A whipping does such a fellow good; but to take his money! Whew!"

"His money!" said Prescott.

"Well, did he consider it yours?" Dan stood for a moment in serious thought; then he walked close up to his friend, and putting an arm across his shoulder, "Thor," he said, "I don't forget that you went in my place; and if ever you know of any danger likely to come from this fellow, I want you to share it with me."

"Oh pshaw, Dan, it was my fault entirely."

"You went as my proxy," said Dan quietly, "and if there are evil consequences, they should fall on me."

Thorley Prescott was strangely moved. He remembered Dan's look and his words, until he had reason never to forget them.

CHAPTER X

TURNING UP A TRUMP

"HAVEN'T I heard it suggested," remarked Jean Stuart, "that the Sabbath is a day of rest?"

Thorley Prescott chuckled. He had been taking supper with the Lawrences because Mr. and Mrs. John Prescott were conducting special meetings at the College. Dan Lawrence had gone over to hold a service at the Guest Department (rooms in one of the mission buildings, where men from out of town were free to lodge for a limited time). Dr. Lawrence had a native conference in his study; and Margaret was upstairs with the children.

"Did they forget to give you time for your Sunday nap?" Jean waved the question aside. "Mr. Lawrence is now preaching for the third time. The second time, he rode eight miles there and ten back because he didn't care to make his horse swim the river twice. Mrs. Lawrence has played the organ in preaching service and in Sunday School, besides teaching a class of little girls. This afternoon she went way over the other side of the city to talk with two or three Moslem women; and between times, she has done most of the work of the house, so as to give her servants a holiday.

"Those ladies at the Seminary have received a constant stream of children, beginning before I was up this morning. They held a church service, because the regular church was so crowded that the children had to be sent away."

"Didn't you wish you could be sent away?" asked Thorley. "I saw you. What did you have hidden in your

handkerchief? You weren't moved to tears by a Syriac sermon."

"I did want to cry when I saw those awful people outside the gate and those wretched little children. Mr. Lawrence said they were homeless refugees from Turkey. What is to become of them?"

Prescott shrugged his shoulders.

"I thought I had seen misery in New York," Jean continued. "It was nothing! How can you *live* with all this before you? Is it always as bad?"

"No, it's worse than ever."

"Whv?"

"The wheat crop failed this year in most villages of the Plain — failed for lack of rain — though it needn't have been so bad," he mused, "if they had known how to use what rain did fall. That brings the country people into the city, destitute. And on top of them we get a mob of Turkish and Nestorian mountaineers, chased out by Kurds."

"What are Kurds?"

"Wild tribes who wander through the Mountains, living on anything they can steal. Fierce fellows they are. I like 'em better than Nestorians; but they make us a heap of trouble."

"What are Nestorians?"

"Syrians, really — the remnants of the old church founded by Nestorius way back in the time of the first heresies."

"Not Moslems, then?"

"Oh no! Staunch Christians — sticking to the faith of their fathers like a dog to a root — not knowing what they have between their teeth, perhaps, but holding on like grim death through persecutions that would have blotted any other people from the face of the earth."

"Persecutions?"

"Certainly. They get it from all sides. Almost all the

mountaineers are Christians, so the Kurds make a practice of swiping their sheep and harrying their wheat-fields. It saves the Government no end of trouble."

"Do you mean that the Government likes to have its subjects persecuted?"

"Of course. Keeps up its own end pretty well, too. A Christian's testimony never stands against a Moslem's in a court of law. He can be skinned out of his eye-teeth; and the judge stands by with righteous approval. Oh, you'll like this country when you know a little more about it. It's a hot place to live in, almost as hot as — I'd better change the subject or you'll begin to dread the prospect of spending the whole winter here." His lips were distorted by a most unpleasant smile; and his eyes, which could be so luminous, were obscured by a thick curtain of gloom.

Miss Stuart leaned forward eagerly in her chair. "I have been waiting for a chance to appeal to you," she said. "Why must I stay here all winter?"

"How can you get away?" His expression became a shade more cheerful, as he looked at her.

"Can't you help me?"

"No, truly, I can not." A real smile struggled to find its way through the darkness of his look; and Jean saw it coming, with a pleasure she did not stop to define.

"Your appeal to Constantinople," he went on, "was the last resort. I'm glad it failed. No person with a knowledge of the country would have started across the mountains with a woman as late as this."

Jean Stuart's eyes were wide open, questioning him without a word. He became aware presently that she was waiting for some kind of explanation.

"What's the matter?" He shuffled his feet uneasily and wished for his pipe. "Oh!" Light broke upon him. "Dan got me to help decipher your telegrams. He wasn't sure what was meant by their garbled Turkish."

She acknowledged the explanation by a nod. "Would you be afraid to cross the mountains now?"

"I? Not alone or with men only."

"I am as hardy as a man."

"What are you suggesting? That I shall take you back?"

"Having received from you a far greater favor, I venture to cherish the faintest of hopes that you may be willing to escort me as far as Tiflis. The American wife of one of your Nestorians is willing to forsake him and go with me."

"Oh, Mirsoon. Don't call him ours. The man is a self-righteous beast. I don't wonder his wife longs for the heaven of her old home in Jersey City."

"I don't, either. Mrs. Lawrence took me yesterday to see the stable she lives in here. How could she have made up her mind to marry him? She told me with regretful pride that if she had stayed where she belonged, she would have had a good chance to get a place as saleslady at Handmaker's. What made her leave it all?"

"The glamor of the East. You ought to know what that is."

"I do; but I'm beginning to know what it is to hunger for a sight of the New York sky-line. There isn't anything half so beautiful in the whole world! And you are going to help us get back to it, aren't you?"

Miss Stuart herself looked very beautiful as she condescended to pleading. She was a woman who could ask a favor and make a man feel that she was conferring one. Thorley Prescott felt his own disappointment far more keenly than hers, as he hesitated long enough to fix in his mind forever the expression of her big gray eyes and the line of her lips.

"I hate to say no," he faltered at last, "but it can't be done. That puny girl could never cross the mountains alive. Even for a strong woman like you, I wouldn't risk it."

"Suppose it were a matter of life and death."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It isn't."

"But if I promise to take the very best care of that woman and not to give you the least bit of trouble?"

He shook his head.

"Then there's some other reason that you haven't told me."

Prescott smiled. "What answer did Miss Trench give you, when you asked her to leave the Moslem girls and visit India and Japan?"

"Mercy on us," said Jean. "I thought she would take my head off! Yet I'm told that she has only ten girls in her school. And that poor thin little Miss Lea looked at me out of her big gray eyes as if she thought I was a messenger of Satan."

"Oh, you tried her, did you?"

"The worst of it is, I believe the child would give the hair off her head to go."

"Any one else?"

"Only Dr. MacColl; and of course, even I was certain she was out of the question."

"So I'm the last resort."

"And there's no earthly reason why you shouldn't go. We'll take the southern route, if you're afraid of the mountains. I'd rather push on to Bushire, anyway, than go back the same way to Constantinople. You know we'd have lots of fun travelling by caravan through southern Persia. You could ride the Fiend to your heart's content; or if he grew tamer than you like, I'd get you a new wild horse every other day."

The gleam in Prescott's eyes had encouraged her through the audacity of this speech. Now his white teeth were flashing in a smile as brilliant as any of her own.

"What do you take me for, anyway?" he said.

"For a man who wasn't made to be cooped up in a printing-

office," she replied. "Honestly now, wouldn't you just love to play hookey for awhile?"

The white teeth gleamed again; but there was more sternness than merriment in the black eyes. "This is no blooming boarding-school," he said.

"Oh," she let her laugh ring out merry and unabashed. "It's Duty and The Work even with you, is it? Duty with a capital D, THE WORK all capitals, italicized. What do you see in these dirty heathen that should keep you teaching them 'Shakespeare and the musical glasses'?"

The sternness had left his eyes; but the smile lingered in them as he continued to gaze at her. "That's right," he said, "get it all out."

Her face changed suddenly back to playfulness. "You see how dangerous I am, don't you? It wouldn't do to let me stay in the Mission Station all winter, and it would never, never, never do to risk my poisoning the minds of these superlatively Christian children."

"Sammy Whiting?" suggested Prescott, and was rewarded by the little sound which he had first heard on the

Muramna highway.

"You understand," Jean asserted. "I couldn't possibly bind myself to teach those youngsters in a way that would please their parents; and if I didn't and yet had to stay on through the winter, I should die of laziness in the middle of so much zeal."

"Isn't the salary an inducement?"

A tiny laugh gurgled in Jean Stuart's throat. Then she turned sober. "Do you know," she said, "I'd hate that worse than anything. I believe just that little tiny salary would represent a pretty big sacrifice for all four families."

"How clever of you!" said Prescott, but his look was more kindly than his words. Then very quizzically he added, "So you really are considering the job. Do you think you know enough?"

She laughed outright.

"Come," she said imperiously. "Give me an answer. You will take me to Bushire, won't you?"

"I will not."

"But why?"

Thorley Prescott rose from his chair and stood before her with his arms folded and his head high.

"Miss Stuart," he said, "I'm not much of a missionary; but I hope I'm man enough to stick to my job. Would you care to think of Dan Lawrence doing double duty while we were playing hookey? And somebody ought to be organizing relief for the refugees."

"An industry, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Would that be difficult?"

A look both grim and eager accompanied the hopeless tone, "Not if we had money."

"Won't your Board furnish it?"

"Hasn't any. Appropriations are sure to be cut, as it is."
"How much money would you need to begin on?"

The eagerness and grimness both increased. "With a thousand dollars," he said fiercely, "I could change the look of the whole country-side. We could make these people over new by giving them honest work; and if I had a thousand dollars I could make money besides."

"You!" laughed Jean.

"Yes, I," said Thorley Prescott, squaring his shoulders. "I could do it better than any man here; and the Fiend and I would kick up our heels all winter at Akbar."

"Well, why don't you?"

Prescott scowled and sat hopelessly down again.

Then Jean Stuart shot her last bolt. "Listen," she said. "It's worth a thousand dollars to me to reach Bushire. If you'll get me there, you shall have the money to bring back."

Thorley Prescott, with an incredulous smile, leaned back in his chair. "That sounds perfectly lovely," he said; "but if you have a thousand dollars to blow in, you can just give it, out and out. Who'd boss the job of spending it, with me in Bushire? And if we're going to carry out that plan of mine, it won't do to waste a single day before the ground freezes hard. I suppose you were joking about that thousand dollars." He scrutinized her face. "You wouldn't offer me wages for doing you a favor. But if by any chance you weren't joking, the Station meets to-morrow to discuss relief work."

He bent forward and looked at her with searching earnestness. Her face was inscrutable. She was saying to herself:—

"Oh pshaw! He's just like the others, after all."

"I wish you'd speak," he said. "I can't tell anything by your face."

"Two can play at taciturnity," she answered.

He scowled, and rising, began to stride up and down the room.

"When I have a home," he muttered, "it shan't be all full of little tables."

Just then the door opened and Dan Lawrence walked in. "Where is Margaret?" he asked, as he dropped into a chair.

"Why, she went upstairs," said Miss Stuart, realizing for the first time that her hostess had been away all the evening.

"I guess I'll go and look her up," said Dan.

"And I must say 'Good night,'" said Prescott, holding out his hand.

"Not until you've seen Mrs. Lawrence," Jean answered, putting her hands behind her and looking saucily into his dogged face. "Let's talk about little old New York. Do you know it? Wouldn't you just love to take a ferry from

Twenty-third Street and watch the lights come out on the high buildings?"

"What about the Chicago sky-line," he rejoined, "from

a sail-boat in the middle of Lake Michigan?"

"There's something to be said even for that," Jean answered.

"And as for the Golden Gate at sunrise—" But Dan Lawrence was coming back.

"Margaret was asleep in a chair," he said wearily, "so I've sent her to bed. I wish there were some way of making Sunday less laborious."

"We'll see what we can do," Jean answered briskly. "Meanwhile, let's begin with Monday. Mrs. Lawrence shall not be school-ma'am a single day longer."

"Do you mean that you will teach the children? And begin to-morrow?" cried Dan, with the smile that Jean so

very much liked to provoke.

"Why, yes, I think I may as well try. You can discharge me, you know, if you find I don't know enough." With the meekness she thought suitable for an employee, she managed to combine a daring flash of fun at Thorley Prescott.

Dan took her hand and gave it a hearty shake.

"I guess we can run the risk," he said gratefully. "Thorley, you know, vouches for your being an intellectual woman."

Prescott grasped the hand which Dan relinquished.

"Oh, no I don't," he said, "I can't vouch for your being anything but a regular trump."

CHAPTER XI

A LETTER TO AUNT CORDELIA

MURAMNA, PERSIA, November 30th, 1903. (Via Berlin and Tabriz)

My DEAREST AUNT CORDELIA, -

This is the first time since reaching Muramna that I have had time to sit down and write you a real letter. Not that it makes any difference; for the mail goes out only once a week, on Tuesday.

I sent you a cable last Thursday, saying that I was safe in Muramna under the care of American friends; but I could not, of course, explain who these friends are. I hope you received my letter written at Hamlas. It must have started on its way at least; for I put it myself into the hands of the The courier whom I found at the River Aras turned out to be something of a rascal, tampering with my mail and other matters which one prefers to keep in one's own hands. He might have put me to real inconvenience but for a very fortunate combination of circumstances. You may remember my speaking of a Mr. Lawrence whom I once saw in Shiloh while visiting the Rosses of Hartford. I happened to know that this man lived in Muramna. when I found that my courier was becoming insubordinate, I sent Mr. Lawrence word: and he despatched to my help his chum, Mr. Thorley Prescott, who pounced upon the Hadji in the nick of time and sent him about his business with a smarting back.

I am now a guest in the house of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence. and very comfortably placed. This is fortunate for me, as I am assured by all the members of the American colony that it will be absolutely unsafe for me to leave here before April at the earliest. You may know that I have not left one stone unturned to get away; for this place is a detestable Oriental city, full of filth and smells which one takes as part of the fun in travelling but loathes the idea of enduring for an entire winter. Besides, in the words of Uncle Philip, there is nothing doing. It may be there are sights to see, though I hear no rumors of anything more thrilling than Zoroastrian remains: but everybody is too busy to show me around, and it is not safe for me now to go alone, as the gentlemen cannot at this season spare me a perfectly reliable man-servant. So you can see that I should soon be reduced to a state of thumb-twiddling that would drive me frantic, did I not resort to drastic measures for diversion. To explain these measures. I must go back a little way. And now prepare yourself, my dear Aunt, for a shock. What do you suppose these Americans are, among whom my lot is cast for the next four or five months?

THEY ARE MISSIONARIES!

Droll, isn't it? There are twenty-five of them, sixteen adults and nine children, the children being missionaries of a far more proselyting stamp than most of the parents. I encountered the entire aggregation for the first time at Thanksgiving dinner, I having arrived the night before in a state of dirt and discomfort that beggars description. Of course I had intended to go to a hotel and provide myself at once with an eminently respectable maid. But it seems there is no such thing as either a hotel or a maid in this horrible country, the inns being occupied exclusively by beasts and vermin, and the girls being all married by the

age of nine! So, in an agony of gratitude, I allowed myself to be installed in the guest-chamber of Mrs. Lawrence, where I bathed in a tin tub, slept in a heavenly bed, feasted my eyes on the stars and stripes, and was nourished by angels in the shape of two quaint children and their still more quaint mamma.

All the missionaries are quaint; but, with one or two exceptions, they are gentle-people. Some of them belong to the very best old families, one of these being an admirer of your own. She is Dr. Flora MacColl, whose grandfather, Dugald MacColl, was at Yale with Grandfather Ionathan. The doctor herself was at Miss Vandermeer's with Aunt Jean. She is a short woman with keen, bright eyes. remembers you with much circumstance, having spent more than one vacation at the old house in Washington Square. She intends to write you herself of my safety and of her resolve to see that I behave myself; so you had better tell your secretary to preserve all letters with Persian stamps; for such letters will be worth reading. Dr. MacColl has the fourth volume of the "Compleat Angler" for which I have been looking all these years. It is bound exactly like my set. I saw that she knew a book from a botch of wood-pulp and printer's ink, but that she was innocent of the worth, in dollars and cents, of her collection. So I mentioned in a perfectly discreet and impersonal way, a sum, which I would not have been willing to take for it but would have been more than willing to give. I thought she would scratch my eves out. She was awfully well bred about it too. You know you have always said that a person who could be rude in an aristocratic way was a person to consider. I must say I am forced to consider Dr. MacColl. She is evidently as poor as skim milk and not at all sensitive about it — told me of her own accord that her best silk gown was ten years old, and expected me to admire its wearing qualities. You can imagine how it looked on a perfectly square woman with

no claims to beauty! But no, you can't; the looks of it pass your comprehension. It is shiny and rusty and slimpsy beyond words. (The doctor smoothed it complacently. and said she always had liked nice material.) It is, moreover, boggled as to its making (even its proud owner admitted that it would hardly outlive another reconstruction). and as to its trimming, it is decayed, the few threads of garniture left on it giving evidence of having begun life as a species of furniture fringe, of a nauseous purple hue. this creation the doctor looks a perfect gentlewoman; and the same thing may be said of Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Franklin, Miss Oddfellow, and Miss Trench, arrayed, all of them, in garments that came out of Methuselah's Ark. (You see I am already taking to the Bible. Have to, in self-defence.) Mrs. Whiting and Miss Lea are tawdry — would like to be fashionable, poor lambs, and can't for obvious reasons, among which their distance from civilization is only one. Mrs. Prescott, surnamed Melissa, in whom I recognize my old friend Medusa, snaky locks and all, would be neither more nor less impressive without any clothes whatever. know what she wore. We have already joined battle, she and I. That is, she has; and so far she has obtained no advantage of me.

But I set out to explain the curious new diversion which I have found. You see these missionaries have among them nine children, very lovely children, too, though rather more puny than one likes to see. Having shut their children off entirely from all educational advantages, the parents club together and engage the services of a teacher. This young person is brought out from America to serve three years. They find her generally, I believe, somewhere in central Idaho. In return for teaching, she receives her travelling expenses, her living while in Muramna, and a salary too munificent to mention. A full-fledged married missionary here gets about eight hundred and fifty dollars a

year, with a hundred dollars thrown in for each child. This princely sum is gathered from church-members in America by a thing called the Board. I have heard people at home, after contributing fifty cents or so to Missions, speak as if every missionary on the field were under personal obligations to them: but I never understood before what the weight of the obligation is. Do you realize that these men and women are dependent upon the caprices of the churches at home for their actual living? Hardly any of them have money of their own. It seems that rich people, even when they believe in Christianity, don't go as missionaries. I always supposed, didn't you, that when they take up collections in church to send to the missionaries, it is for the purpose of giving them a little extra money by way of luxury? But it seems there is nothing so horrifying to a Christian at home as the idea of a missionary living in luxury! I see now that I must have supposed, though I never thought about it, that missionaries went out under a kind of impersonal endowment, something like college professors. But it seems the Board has to scrape and pinch every year and send out appeals, even to the missionaries themselves, before it can get enough to keep up the work that has already been started. The things they tell me are very surprising; and I can't make head or tail of them vet. But this is wandering far from the subject. Uncle Philip, being a business man and a churchman, can explain the whole thing to you, though even he may be a little puzzled because these people are not Episcopalians.

To return to our teachings, they brought a young schoolma'am out here last year at great expense. Her name I am told was Esther Wilcox and she came from Massachusetts. She was harmless, capable, and pious; and they were perfectly satisfied with her services. This earnest young person has now gone, by her own wish, with the consent and advice of the bereaved parents, to teach in the Nestorian

Girls' School at Tabriz, for the purpose of keeping that institution from going under by reason of the ill-health of those responsible for it. This is boring you, of course; but it brings me to the point. The position thus left vacant by the devotion of Miss Wilcox to a collection of greasy Nestorians (see Encyclopedia) has been offered by Mr. Lawrence to no less a person than your distinguished and remarkable grand-niece (here regarded in no such rosy light as that). What is more, it has been accepted, and a contract signed to last until April 15th unless Miss Wilcox can arrange to return before that auspicious date, in which case your grandniece is to be released from her contract, if she so desires. She is to instruct these nine children, four hours a day, five days in the week, in subjects ranging from mat-weaving to Homer and Solid Geometry; and she is to receive as compensation: her living, consisting of board and lodging at the Lawrences', good but very plain, and the gorgeous sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars, which, it may be said in passing, she hates like the very devil to accept.

One entire morning has she already devoted to this task, in consequence of which she aches in every limb as if she had been pounded, and her head feels almost as intelligent as a potato.

The children are interesting. There are among them: two prodigies, one semi-prodigy, three lambs, two ordinary children, stupid, but not disagreeable, and one Limb of Satan. I like them all. In fact, I find myself, by reason of them and other things, more taken up with life than I have dreamed of being since my little Mary left me. As this was the object for which I started round the world, I count myself lucky to have attained it so soon, and (can I say it without vulgarity?) so cheaply. The missionaries, by the way, were dreadfully shocked at my arriving in their midst without a chaperon (you would like their ideas of propriety), and demanded an explanation of my behavior.

What's more, I gave it and was glad of the chance to defend myself! Oh, they're not to be sneezed at. You would see it yourself.

Now, dearest Aunt, please bear in mind that I have my seasons of poignant homesickness. There are moments when I would fervently embrace the toe of the Statue of Liberty if I could get at it. Mrs. Lawrence says she would give anything for a morning's shopping with an ice-cream soda after it! As for me, I believe I should be willing to go to the dentist's for the sake of riding in the Elevated. Write me everything, and send me all the papers and most of the magazines. I would rather read even that abominable Grown Gossips than visit the remains of the fire-worshippers. And there are others here who would join me in a little harmless mental dissipation, if not unduly urged.

Tell all my friends I will never forget it of them if they write me now, particularly Uncle Philip. Tell —

I hear a terrific noise downstairs. I think it has something to do with the Limb of Satan, who is here for the afternoon while his parents attend Station Meeting. (See Reports of the W. C. T. F. M., or any other Christian organization with an equal number of letters.) I can't stand that noise. I must go down and see what it's all about.

As ever, your devoted niece, Jean Stuart.

Later. Lest any of my letters should have been lost, I will repeat that I wish the suit for the recovery of Delia's money carried on to the bitter end. When the entire sum has been used up in costs, it will be time to stop. I have no intention that Mercer Bryant shall take his ease for the rest of his life by means of the Stuart fortune. Any compromise will be directly contrary to my wishes. To avert such a thing, I should be ready to send for Robert Courtlandt and go meekly home with him in that canal-worthy yacht of his!

And you can hardly know how I feel about that when I tell you that I would rather teach here for two winters than submit to such a thing. You cannot know, because you have never been in Muramna. And since I have incautiously suggested the idea, let me warn you that I will not make use of Robert Courtlandt's yacht. I have made up my mind now to stay here for the winter; I have put myself under contract to fulfil certain duties; and stay I will, though all the well-chaperoned steam-yachts in the world should lie at anchor just outside Muramna walls (which they couldn't possibly do). So here I am, let me say in conclusion, and here will I stay to the end of the chapter; but send me things to read, and above all things, write to your stranded and slightly homesick Jean.

CHAPTER XII

THE STATION MEETING

WHILE Tean Stuart was writing home, the monthly meeting of Muramna Station was being held in the lecture-room of Faith Seminary. Dr. Lawrence was in the chair, the gentlemen were seated in a group in front of him, while near the window on two sides of the room the ladies formed a fringe of industry. Miss Oddfellow had appropriated a skirt of Miss Lea's and, under the rapt and unconscious eye of her young colleague, was placidly darning a jagged tear with one of her own long gray hairs. Miss Trench and Mrs. Lawrence were sewing swiftly on the same little dress, with now and then a whispered conference about it. Dr. Mac-Coll was rolling bandages. Mrs. Prescott, with her most martyr-like expression and her crooked glasses astride of her immense nose, was making her weekly attack on the stocking-bag. All these ladies had learned by long practice to occupy their fingers while their minds were concerned with the business of the meeting. It is doubtful, however, whether poor little Mrs. Whiting had, at first, any attention to spare for the relief-work discussion in which her husband was taking so vigorous an interest. She was distressed, to begin with, because George had refused to sit beside her, knowing as he did that one of his ears would be assailed by a steady stream of appeals. George, who had rather a plodding mind, found it very disconcerting to recall his thoughts from a question of tomans and chahis to the decision as to whether his son, who could be seen from the window playing in the Lawrences' back yard, was likely to break

his neck if he fell from the mulberry tree, which must have been at least six feet high. Miss Lea, too, was so absorbed in the famine that she failed to be at all interested in nice distinctions of pink and yellow, the feeling for which formed such a bond between her and Mrs. Whiting. That distracted lady was obliged on this occasion to pour all her whisperings into the ear of Mrs. Prescott who was hard of hearing on that side, and replied only by Jovine nods which she considered an eminently Christian concession to the weak-mindedness of her neighbor. Mrs. Franklin, a little in front of the other ladies, and just behind the gentlemen, was sitting easily in her chair with her hands folded in her lap and her eyes fixed calmly on whatever person was speaking.

"I never could do two things at once," she always said, when asked why she did not bring her work to Station Meeting.

Little Miss Lea, as soon as the discussion began, leaned forward in her chair with a look that was almost beautiful in the intensity of its enthusiasm. She was only twenty-one, just out of College; and this was her first winter on the Mission Field. Roger Standish, who was not much older, had turned his chair so that he could watch her. The other men were all intent on the matter in hand; and Roger would have sworn that he was as intent as any man of them.

George Whiting was speaking. "I have estimated that there are five hundred families on the Plain and in the city who are without adequate provision for the winter. Of these at least one-fourth are in immediate need of help. There are also an uncounted lot of refugees from Turkey and the Border, mostly men who will soon be a menace to the community, if neglected."

"How much is there left of the relief fund?" asked Dan Lawrence.

The Chair called on Thorley Prescott, the Station Treasurer, for an answer.

"Eight dollars and five cents," growled Prescott. "Have we any wheat?" asked Mrs. Franklin.

"Not more than enough to run the schools through the winter," said Thorlev.

"The question arises whether we have any right to hoard that wheat through the winter when people around us are starving. Why not dole it out now," said the generous Miss Oddfellow, "and trust the Lord to provide us with more as we need it? Surely He will not allow His children to hunger."

"I bet He will, if their elders have no more sense than that," Thorley muttered to Dan Lawrence.

"Say so, then, if you can do it without profaning anybody's feelings."

"I can't. Say it yourself."

Dan rose slowly and faced them all.

"Friends," he said, "we are confronted with one of the most serious questions of our missionary life. It is evident that relief work must be done; and that, if it is to make any impression on the situation, it must be more extensive than anything we have ever undertaken. To dole out the little supply of wheat we have, would only seem to help matters for a very few weeks. Then the people would be just as hungry as they are now; and their habits of idleness would be confirmed, as well as their daily dependence on us for bread. The only thing to do is to give them work and to pay them for it in money. We have no money now; but I would rather depend on the Lord to send us what we need for the starting of an industry, than to give away our little hoard of wheat, which we require for keeping our engagements with the young people in the schools, - than to give away our honor, I may say, for the sake of supporting these refugees a few days in idleness. I should like to ask whether there is any way of getting special sums from America."

This speech led to a double discussion. Several persons spoke about the difficulty of starting industries in the winter. A number of others dwelt on the impossibility of getting money from America in time to relieve the immediate necessities of the people.

"The upshot of the whole thing is," said Dr. Franklin, "that we ought to have gone at this business months ago in a systematic way; but there is so much to be done day by day in our regular work, and so few, so abominably few to do it!" The doctor paused to mop his brow with an enormous silk handkerchief, yellow with age and ragged as it could be. Mrs. Prescott, finishing a monumental darn in a sock of her stepson's, reflected that it would be more becoming if Mrs. Franklin mended her husband's clothes instead of sitting like a snow image with her hands in her lap. The doctor, who had that very morning reclaimed that very handkerchief from Harriet, who intended to use it for a paint-rag, stowed it away in his coat-tail pocket. whence the most ragged corner of it jauntily emerged, and went on more cheerfully with his remarks. "My wife, I know, wrote letters in the summer to her church people at home. I presume that at the psychological moment, she will produce rather a handsome sum from one of my old stockings. Why haven't we all been writing letters ?"

"People in America are tired of relief work." It was Margaret Lawrence who spoke from the back of the room. "They've given to it now for years. You can't make them realize the poverty and the suffering; and they think it's like pouring money into a bottomless sieve."

"So it is!" said Mrs. Franklin. "That's precisely what it is! We beg and beg, and give and give; and what return do we get for it, except an uncertain amount of gratitude

and a heap of curses from the paupers we have helped to make?"

"Whew!" whistled the doctor. But the word was lost in a storm of exclamations and protests. The ladies left their handiwork to enter the heart of the fray. The industrial work of past years was praised and defended on all sides. Mr. Frever spoke of the roads which had been made under the direction of the older Prescott. The road to the College, he declared, was a monument of faithful service: and countless lives had been saved by the money which had been paid for it. Miss Oddfellow recalled the industries begun among the women by former colleagues. George Whiting called attention to the spirit of self-respecting work which had always been encouraged among the young men at the College. Mr. John Prescott praised his students at the Theological Seminary, and challenged any one present to find one pauper among them. Miss Trench declared that even her Moslem girls were beginning to love work for its own sake.

"Aren't we wandering from the subject?" said Dan Lawrence. "The problem before us does not concern the people whom we have had under our influence in our schools and as our employees. It is simply a question whether we can grapple with this chance to help hundreds of outside people who may die of starvation. If we had means to give them food, it would be easy enough to make them work for it. The great and only question in my mind is, where is that money coming from?"

Mrs. Whiting's high voice rose tremulously.

"Can't we all give up more of our own comforts?" she said. "I'm willing to do without, and so is George, if only the children can have enough to nourish them. (They're growing so fast now, dear little things!) Surely not one of us will refuse to sacrifice every needless luxury." She blushed down at her embroidery, glad to remember that

the materials had been a present from her sister. "Thanks-giving dinner nearly choked me," she finished with a sob, "because I was thinking about those starving little Mountain children whom Dr. Franklin found that very day."

George Whiting went over and sat down by his wife, while Mrs. Prescott patted her ponderously on the shoulder.

"Dear Mrs. Whiting," said Mrs. Franklin, "we had those things, and the Persians don't like them. Could any little children have been saved by your cranberry sauce? Yet it strengthened us wonderfully because it was a taste of home."

"I think Mrs. Whiting is right," cried Amy Lea, "we ought to be willing to give up everything for these people."

"And so we are," said Miss Trench quietly, "God knows we are."

"Brethren," said Dr. Lawrence, rising, "at the beginning of this meeting we asked God's blessing on our deliberations. We have come now to a moment of doubt, when our judgments, limited as they are, seem to clash one with another. Let us speak again to our Father, asking for His immediate guidance in this matter: that His Spirit may be in us all, and that His purpose may be put clearly into the mind of some one of us."

He looked around, intending to call on the older Mr. Prescott, but in the search his eye fell on Thorley and involuntarily he said,—

"Will you lead us?"

Thorley Prescott half rose, then he sank back in his chair, saying under his breath,—

"Please ask some one else."

While Dr. Lawrence hesitated, a pall of embarrassment fell upon the little company. It is impossible to explain how mortified they were that one of their number should refuse to lead them in prayer. They all knew that Thorley Prescott "drew the line" as he himself had once put it "on

lifting up his feeble voice in public advice to the Almighty." This remark, drawn out by an exhortation from George Whiting, had been noised abroad in the Station, and since then Thorley Prescott had never been asked to pray in public. The present breaking over of a long-standing rule was thought to be a sign that Dr. Lawrence was growing forgetful. In reality the old gentleman had surprised upon the face of Thorley Prescott an expression which made him feel that his young friend was the one best able to interpret the Lord's will concerning the problem of the refugees. Dr. Lawrence himself was not at all embarrassed by Thorley's refusal to lead in prayer. His hesitation, which was an agony to several of his colleagues, was to him only a moment of reflection before he should make another choice.

The silence was still unbroken when the door at the back of the lecture-room burst open, and Sammy Whiting, with a mighty roar, threw himself upon his mother, his face streaming with blood. His two sisters followed him, weeping lustily; but the other children, excepting Edward Franklin, stood in an awe-stricken group at the door, wondering how the Whitings could dare to enter a Station meeting. Not one of them would have done it on pain of death.

The two doctors reached the child before his mother could even turn pale.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Whiting," said Dr. Franklin, "it's nothing but nosebleed." He swabbed the child's face vigorously with his handkerchief, and propelled him none too gently toward the door.

"You come, too," sobbed Mrs. Whiting, laying hold of Dr. MacColl. "I never can get Dr. Franklin to tell me anything. Sammy may be disfigured for life, and he will say it's nothing. What's that, Jane? You say he fell from the tree? Well, I shan't have a moment's rest until you have both examined every inch of his spine."

The words were spoken hurriedly, as the two women fol-

lowed Sammy and his guide. The little girls tagged after them, hardly knowing whether or not to go on crying, but the other children promptly scattered to their play.

At the Lawrences', Dr. Franklin made short work of washing Sammy's face.

"You see there's nothing the matter," he said, ignoring Mrs. Whiting's tremulous demand for disinfectants. "The skin isn't broken anywhere. Get a wad of paper, Sam, and put it under your upper lip. If your nose begins to bleed again, chew. You see it's stopped bleeding already, Mrs. Whiting. We may as well go back to the meeting. Ted, where were you when this happened? Don't tell me you can't stop nosebleed."

Edward, who, with his finger closed in the leaves of his book, had been grinning in the background, now looked sober enough. He foresaw that the rest of his afternoon would be spent in keeping Sammy Whiting out of mischief, so with the resignation of necessity he closed his book and preposed a game of dominoes.

Dr. MacColl had lingered, hoping to take Mrs. Whiting back with her to the meeting. That tremulous parent having settled her son in an arm-chair, with cushions enough to drive him distracted, was hanging over him ready to pounce on any signs of injury to the back.

"A mother's first duty is to her child," she declared, and Dr. MacColl hurried for the door lest she should disgrace herself by laughing at the disgusted expression on Sammy's face.

In the hall she encountered Miss Stuart.

"Yes," she said, before Jean could speak. "There's been a hubbub; but it's only Sammy Whiting; and it would be all over now, if Stella had any sense. Did you mean what you said about those books?"

Jean gasped. "Those first editions of yours? You said they were heirlooms."

"Well, I have to get money if I can," declared Dr. Mac-Coll. "Of course I don't want to urge you; but if you have any gold to spare, you may take your choice of the books or buy 'em all. I want cash."

"Relief work, I suppose," said Jean, and wondered at her

own impudence.

"Well, yes. I hear that Thorley Prescott has a plan. If he's allowed to manage it his own way, it'll do as much as anything can. Now of course I don't want to urge you; but you looked as if you wanted that 'Compleat Angler.' Fifty-one pounds would go a long way."

Jean looked at her in silence until the doctor grew

impatient.

"Come, come," she said, "you know whether you want it or not."

"Do you suppose," said Jean slowly, "that I would be the means of your parting with one of those precious books?"

"I'd rather you'd have 'em than an English Earl. I'll never be comfortable with 'em again, now that I know their money value."

Jean turned her face from the light and cleared her throat. "I suppose you never allow strangers in your meeting," she said; "I'd like to hear those plans for relief."

"Yes, come along," cried the doctor. "We can haggle afterwards about the books. Thorley may be speaking now."

CHAPTER XIII

WHILE THEY WERE YET SPEAKING

DR. MACCOLL opened the door of the lecture-room and stopped short, motioning Jean to remain where she was in the corridor. Over the little lady's shoulder Jean saw that the missionaries were all on their knees — all but one, who sat motionless in his chair. Jean knew that square head and those broad shoulders, though the face was turned away from her; and she noticed that he sat as if he were very tired. She wondered mischievously if it could be that he were worn out with piety.

Now in all her life before Tean Stuart herself had never listened to so much praying as during her five days in Muramna. She had been brought up not to attend church; and though she sometimes went with her friends when it was the courteous thing to do, the services to which they took her had never yet drawn her to go again on her own account. She liked to hear the prayers in the Episcopal liturgy when they were well read, because the language was so beautiful and the ideas so lofty; but the ordinary "long prayer" had no power to hold even her attention. or twice she had been impressed with the sincerity of a speaker who seemed to be praying for his audience rather She remembered, for instance, that in than at them. Shiloh she had wondered whether Dan Lawrence actually believed he was speaking to Some One greater than man. Who heard him. Now she was perfectly sure that Dan believed in a God Who heard his prayers. He and Dr. Lawrence spoke to Him as if He were a friend right there in the very

room with them, interesting Himself in all that concerned their lives. What was stranger still, they seemed to expect Him to answer them. All these previous impressions flashed through her mind as she discovered the voice that was now speaking to be that of Dan Lawrence himself. And now, as his words began to make their way into her mind, she could no longer doubt that he fully expected an answer—that in fact he intended to wait and get it before he made any further plans. There was a thrill of triumph in the way he pronounced the words "for Jesus' sake," and she found herself wondering if he could ever explain to her how it was that he had grown to feel so sure of such a mystery as this idea of God.

The missionaries were rising from their knees and Dr. MacColl was marching into the room. She walked straight up to Dr. Lawrence, while Jean quietly stepped out of sight into the corridor. She heard Dr. Lawrence put a question to which there was a murmur of assent. Then he himself came down to the door and in his stately way offered her his arm.

"We are glad to have you with us," he said, "though this has been a time of great perplexity."

Jean, finding herself in a chair beside Dr. MacColl, smiled at the complete novelty of her position and wondered what Robert Courtlandt would say, if he could see her. She had not glanced at Thorley Prescott as she came in, and she was sitting now with her back to him; so she was ignorant that since he had known of her presence, every line of his figure and face had changed.

"Mr. Chairman," he cried, springing to his feet, "I have a plan for relief work. Would you care to hear it?"

Dr. MacColl jumped up. "I move that Mr. Thorley Prescott be asked to tell his plan in detail; and be a little generous with your words," she added, with a sharp glance at Thorley as she sat down. Thorley gave one suppressed chuckle, as Dan Lawrence seconded the motion; and he was still smiling when it had been carried and he rose to address the meeting. But the meeting to him just then consisted of one person only; and he openly shifted his position until he could face her while speaking.

"If we had a thousand dollars," said Thorley Prescott, "we could make water-pipes at Akbar. I found last summer that the clay there is just the thing for pottery, so I had a lot of it put under shelter in the cellars of the old Seminary buildings. It's packed around with hay, and it won't freeze this winter unless the weather is unusually severe. In our three houses on the mountain we could lodge at least fifty men."

"Fifty men," protested George Whiting, "that's packing them in pretty tight."

"Natives can sleep on the ground floor, you know," answered Thorley, "but we'll say forty. That allows room for a cook-house and a general dining-room. If the mild weather holds (and the ground hasn't even frozen since that one snow-storm), we can easily run up walls to connect the houses. That would give us two more dwellings each about twice as large as the old ones. You can reckon to suit yourselves; but I make it that we'd have room for one hundred and fifty men. Now for the water-pipes. We'd roof in the old Seminary buildings, very roughly of course, make a lot of wooden moulds, set a few potters' wheels a-going, use the two old brick ovens for kilns, and turn out several hundred pipes a day. Meantime we'd build a small reservoir and save the spring water till warmer weather when we'd dig a trench down to the College, continue it to the city, and have pure, fresh drinking water in every one of our houses."

The housewives turned to look at each other with expressions of joyful bewilderment.

"Then the result of this work would be merely a very great luxury for ourselves, obtained at an enormous cost?" The voice was the voice of Mrs. Prescott.

"A thousand dollars," said George Whiting, "large though it seems, now when we haven't it, would hardly run such an industry all winter."

"Of course not," said Thorley. "I'm planning to make money. You know that since the last cholera scare, even the Mohammedans have been more careful about drinking the water from the river. It runs in under their houses." he explained turning again to Miss Stuart, "and stands in open receptacles called shakeetas. Of course it's just about as filthy as water can be and flow. They used to laugh at us because we had our drinking water and our cooking water carried from our own springs; but I find that a good many of the wealthy families have taken to doing the same thing. But it's an awful nuisance, because it makes no end of extra work for the servants. They hate it and substitute contaminated water whenever they can. I believe I could persuade at least ten men in Muramna to buy water-pipes even before we got our own pipe line into working order. I was talking it over the other day with Hassan Mirza Khan, and he said if we ever did such a thing, he'd want pipes enough to go from his summer home to his palace in the city. Two or three orders like that would keep us going all winter. and pay for our own waterworks."

"It sounds fine," said Dr. Franklin, "but what's the use of talking about it when we haven't got the thousand dollars? I suppose you couldn't get Hassan Mirza Khan to advance the money?"

"Owe money to a Moslem?" groaned Miss Oddfellow.

"Not money, only water-pipes," answered the doctor.

There was a grim smile on Thorley Prescott's face. "I did think one day I had him worked up to just that. But when we came down to details, there was so much pishkesh

and so many other exactions that I thought I'd rather wait until I was in a position to make terms myself."

Jean Stuart now spoke. "May I ask a question?"

"Certainly," said Thorley, without waiting for the Chair.
"If you started this work, what would become of the wives and children of these men?"

"As soon as the men are earning money," Thorley answered, "there'll be no trouble in finding lodgings for their families. There's a deserted village on the mountain-side very near our place; and I have it in mind that many of the families will be brought there. Later the men could live with them, if it was more convenient. But lots of families are still starving in their old homes, while the men have come to forage in the city. Arrangements will have to be made for food to be sent them."

"You seem to have considered everything," said Jean.

"Do you like the plan?" asked Thorley.

The rest of the Station sat aghast, all but Dr. MacColl. Several of them thought it unseemly that a stranger should have been admitted to a Station meeting. Several more were scandalized at the informal proceedings that were upsetting all their routine. Very few had any hope that Thorley Prescott's plans would ever come to anything. In their amazement at his talking so much, they had little idea of what the plans really were. They only knew that everything hinged on the tremendous and non-existent sum of one thousand dollars.

"I should think," said Jean conversationally to Dr. Mac-Coll, "that you'd vote to adopt these plans in case you can get the thousand dollars. Of course, you'd place Mr. Prescott at the head of the work; but then who would tend to the Treasury and write that paper?"

Dan Lawrence heard her. It flashed through his mind that his prayer was being answered then and there. He rose and addressed the Chair:—

"I move that Mr. Thorley Prescott's plans for the waterpipe industry at Akbar be carried out as soon as the necessary funds can be collected; that Mr. Thorley Prescott be given full management of all the arrangements; and that his present work, while he is otherwise occupied, be divided among the rest of us."

"Second the motion," said Dr. MacColl.

"You have heard the motion, brethren," announced Dr. Lawrence. "Are you ready for the question?"

"Question!" shouted Thorley Prescott; and the question was put.

There were four affirmative votes and none for the negative.

"The motion is carried," said Dr. Lawrence rather bewildered.

Jean Stuart had been whispering to Dr. MacColl; and the sturdy little doctor now rose, tears filling her keen dark eyes.

"I am asked to announce," she said, "that the necessary funds have been collected. One thousand dollars in French gold is at the immediate disposal of the Mission Treasurer."

Half an hour later Thorley Prescott was taking Miss Stuart back to the Lawrence house.

"Do you know," he said, "I feel ashamed. Dan took the trouble to pray. He knew there was an answer coming and he deserved it; but look who's getting the lion's share of Dan's answer."

Miss Stuart looked at him in amazement. "Do you believe that his praying had anything to do with it?"

Thorley Prescott smiled in the way she liked to see. "If I don't," he declared, "I'm the only one of the whole bunch that doesn't. You'll see what Dr. Lawrence says to you. Rather hard to give a whopping present, isn't it, and have it all attributed to the Lord?"

Jean gratified him by making the little sound as he followed her into the sitting-room. Dr. Lawrence was there, peering eagerly out of the window. As he heard the door open, he came over to her with both hands out.

"God answered us," he said, "while we were yet speaking; and you are the answer."

CHAPTER XIV

THEIR IDEA OF FUN

"So you've lived through the week," said Dr. MacColl, stopping Jean Stuart in the passage outside her schoolroom which was in Dr. Franklin's house. "How are you going to like this business of teaching?"

"The children are charming; that is, most of them are." Jean smiled a little in answer to the twinkle in the doctor's eye. "But," she added, shrugging her shoulders, "what I don't know!"

"You know the subjects you're supposed to impart?"

"Oh yes, at least I know how to get to know them. But how to impart them! Those children are so different. Some of them soak in knowledge like little spong.". For others, you have to take every bit of information apart and pound in each separate piece like a tack. Some of them are awfully sensitive; and at the least hint of disapproval, they melt into tears; one or two are so thick-skinned that nothing but a vigorous application of a competent stick would make the slightest impression. But I mustn't stand here gossiping with you; Ruth and Danny are waiting for me."

"Indeed I will. Just let me speak to the children. It's all right for them to ride home alone with Hilgar, isn't it?"

"Oh, certainly."

[&]quot;I want you to stay and lunch with me."

[&]quot;Really? How nice of you!"

[&]quot;You'll come, then?"

"Do you know?" said Jean, sitting back in her chair, "I've eaten two bowls of this sour milk —"

"Do call it mesta," interrupted the doctor.

"— as well as several square feet of bread. What do you call that?"

"Lawash."

"It's good, isn't it? What a relish one has for food when one has to work all the morning, whether or no!"

Dr. MacColl smiled. "It's rather pathetic that you should have lived so long without finding that out. You should have been put to work at something interesting five years ago at least."

"This is a place where one is not likely to be hurt by flattery!"

"Wait until you know the language. The natives will lay it on thick enough. Are you going to begin with Syriac or Turkish?"

Jean's eyes opened wide. "Why should I learn either? If I were to attack a language, Persian would be more in my line. I like the Classics pretty well, in spite of having been sujected to them in early youth by Grandfather Jonathan."

"Dry bones!" exclaimed the doctor. "I refer, of course, to the Classics. What's the use of your learning Persian? Nobody speaks it now. Whereas, if you understand only a little Turkish, you'll be able to go into Moslem houses and get at the women. I have a notion that you'd be very clever at it. Besides, the natives all consider you a great lady; and that's one thing we're very much in need of among the Mohammedans, prestige, 'giddy prestige, by Gum.'"

The doctor stopped short, looking very guilty as a peal of laughter broke from Jean. "Quoting Stalky!" she cried. "That vulgar, delicious Stalky; and in a nefarious attempt to coerce a much-abused fellow-creature into a line of effort for which she has not the slightest taste. I'd be glad to go

and look at Mohammedan women in their homes (I'm told they're a sight; and sight-seeing is, after all, the legitimate sphere of a tourist, which I am); but I see myself trying to influence them! What shall I influence them to? I haven't as much religion as they have; and if I had, it probably wouldn't be half as helpful to them as their own. Why can't you leave the poor things alone? You can't emancipate them; and you will only make them discontented in their seclusion."

The doctor shook her head with a look more sorrowful than Jean had ever seen on her keen face. "Ever read the Koran?" she asked.

"About as much as I had read the Bible till I came here. I thought that rather interesting at morning prayers as it told about the life of Christ. But now I'm getting an overdose. I've been to church since I came, I should say, about seventeen times. They give me an English Bible with the places picked out, so I can follow the service. There's nothing else to do, and I read to pass away the time."

"But always at some other place," interrupted the doctor. Jean acknowledged this comment by breaking into one of her most confidential smiles. "Mrs. Prescott offered to prescribe for me a course of daily readings."

Dr. MacColl scowled, muttering under her breath an ejaculation that ended with the word business, hissed out with a vicious emphasis that made it more distinct than she realized.

Jean Stuart, with a feeling of gratification, went on, "I told her that when I felt the need of independent daily readings, I should reserve the privilege of going to a clergyman. I don't think she liked it very well, but she hasn't talked to me since about reading the Bible. And now the parents say there must always be a portion of it read at the opening of school. I told Mr. Whiting I thought it a waste of time, seeing that the children got so much of it at home. He

wasn't pleased, either. I should have loved to fight it out with him; but of course he is a parent and the others all agreed with him; so I gave in. They said I must have a prayer, too, and Mr. Whiting, busy as he is with that whole College, offered to come and make the prayer every morning, if I felt unequal to the responsibility. I did feel unequal; but rather than have him poking in every morning, I was going to say I'd do it, when Mr. Lawrence came to my rescue by suggesting that the Lord's prayer, repeated in unison, would be sufficient; and after some discussion the others consented. I should think it would be difficult even for Mrs. Prescott to object when he suggests anything. He is the dearest man!"

"Isn't he?" cried Dr. MacColl. "I don't know what we should do without him."

"Amy Lea told me afterward, with a face as long as the moral law, that Mrs. Whiting feared I was almost as irreligious as Mr. Thorley Prescott. She (Miss Lea) wished, as a friend, to give me the opportunity of contradicting it."

"What did you say?" the doctor leaned forward in her interest.

"I said I admired Mr. Prescott very much and should not dream of declaring myself superior to him in any way. I presume the little idiot went straight back and told Mrs. Whiting that I am in love with the Thunderer; for they have both regarded me ever since with a horrified interest, and Mrs. Prescott is more unpleasant than before, if possible. What is the matter with Thorley Prescott, anyway? Why does he stay here if he's so vitally different from the rest of you? That man ought to be digging the Big Canal or making the bridge across Behring Strait, or running the War Department—I believe he'd like that best of all, except in times of peace — but here he sits frowsting in a two by four treasury, getting out a weekly sheet of drivel on a foot-

power press twenty years old, and beside himself with joy because he can get out for a few weeks and stand over a handful of ragamuffins while they make mud water-pipes with a homemade wooden mould! It enrages me to see such a *Man* with all his splendid powers going to waste!"

"A sorrowful sight, indeed."

"Would you be glad, then, if he got a chance to do something different?"

"He couldn't take it."

"Why not?"

"You would like to have me tell you about Thorley Prescott,—the circumstances that led to his being a missionary here, and that make it impossible for him ever to be anything else?"

Jean was silent a moment; then she raised her eyes to Doctor MacColl's. "No," she said, "if there is a mystery about his life, I'd rather hear it from him."

"There is no mystery; and I doubt if he will ever tell you, but — oh, well, it is rather like talebearing, isn't it?"

Jean laughed. "Mrs. Lawrence started one evening in the kindliest way to tell me about him; and I stopped her short. Just the same I wish you had told me without waiting to ask whether I cared to bend my soul to gossip. I would like to know about him. I find him very interesting; and as you say, I am not likely to extract many confidences from himself. How he did set me down at Thanksgiving dinner! And yet, I really think he rather likes me!"

Dr. MacColl chuckled. "I knew you were made of good stuff," she declared. "I suppose in all your life before, you have never come to the bar of public opinion as a naked soul."

"Oh, Lord!" said Miss Stuart, "what would my Aunt Cordelia say?"

"Quite so," the doctor agreed, "she wouldn't like it for you at all; but I say, it's an excellent thing for a human

being to be stripped, for once, of all the advantages or disadvantages of his social position and stand or fall before a jury of his fellow-beings, entirely on his own intrinsic worth."

"That's a large thought," said Jean, rippling with amusement. "Let me see, am I standing or falling? The Whitings are rather cool; but you and the Lawrences and the Franklins are delightfully warm. Miss Oddfellow and Miss Trench are civil; and little Miss Lea doesn't know as yet which tack to take. As for Mrs. Prescott, she frankly hates me; but then, I consider one good enemy an invaluable social asset; and she, if you will pardon my saying so, is a corker."

"By the way, if you want help about methods of teaching, Mrs. Prescott is the one to ask. She has read every book on Pedagogy that ever wasted printers' ink; and in spite of it. she's the best teacher I ever saw."

"That Medusa!"

"See here, you're not to call names about my colleagues."
"Look at me." Jean fell on her knees beside the doctor. One arm went over the back of the chair while the other touched the doctor's knee. The gray eyes were so close that the doctor could see the black circle around each iris and the little golden spots that gleamed far below the surface with the light that one discovers at the bottom of a mountain brook. Then, under the scrutiny of the black eyes, the pupils of the gray eyes enlarged until one pair of eyes was no blacker than the other and both were full of the light of a good new friendship. Then Jean's face changed again. In an instant it was all mischief, coaxing, bewitching.

"You don't mind it then, so awfully much, my calling her the Medusa?"

But the doctor hardened her heart and shook her head. In a flash there came another change: the gray eyes saddened, and the white lids shut over them like a curtain suddenly drawn to keep from a night-wanderer the glow of a happy home. Bending her head, Jean brushed with her lips the doctor's square, hard-working little hand; and, as she rose from her knees, she said penitently, "No, after all, I hadn't the right to explode. You are — one of them, and I, as you say, am only the naked soul of a stranger standing outside; and why, after all, should I specially care to come in?" The head lifted itself again with its natural pride; and Dr. Flora MacColl, formerly of Schenectady, saw confronting her for the moment, a personage no other than the Miss Stuart of New York and Bar Harbor.

Not one whit overawed, the doctor rose and, reaching up, put her hands on the shoulders of Miss Stuart. "My dear," she said, "I was wrong to stop you. With me, if you won't tell that I like it, you may call us all the names you can think of. Melissa shall be the Medusa and Dr. Franklin the Monster. I'll be the Gnome, if you say so. You'll have to do something to let off steam, if you're going to teach all winter under the supervision of George Whiting. And let me tell you," she whispered, mounting a footstool to approach Jean's ear. "I'd need to blow off boilers of steam, if I lived next door to the Medusa and in the bosom of that goldily good Lawrence family. I adore every one of 'em from the Doctor to Danny; but I can't live up to 'em, can you?"

Jean laughed merrily. "Oh, the tact of her," she cried. "Who would have thought it of a lady so outspoken! And that's the heart of your tact, that you've done me the honor to speak out to me. You've divined just how I feel about the Lawrences; and yet, do you know, sometimes I think that Danny would like to be almost as naughty as I feel? Even I don't act naughty at the Lawrences', not very; why, I've learned already not to talk when they want to ask the blessing!"

She looked like a penitent child; and Dr. MacColl felt,

for the first time in her life, like an indulgent grandmother. "You are good, and as a reward you shall go round my hospital with me."

"No, no!" cried Jean, hanging back. "I told you I loathed seeing people suffer, especially children! Are there children? I can't see them."

"We-e-ell," said the doctor slowly, "but I thought you would be interested. It's such a wonderful work. They're so comfortable — so different from the ones you see on the streets. You'll have to excuse me, then. Wait until I come back, and we'll ride together to the city. Dr. Franklin is going, too."

Jean followed her to the door. "Another day please ask me again," she said wistfully, "I can't get used to so much goodness quite all at once; you said so yourself, you know."

"But this work of mine isn't good," declared the doctor, "so much as it's just interesting."

"Ah, that's it, precisely," said Jean. "It's nuts to you. To me it is the most squalid kind of drudgery. Who was it that 'went about doing good?' Well, that's your idea of fun."

"It was Jesus Christ," said the doctor, tucking her instruments under her arm; and as she turned to trudge away, she added under her breath, "'whose I am, and whom I serve."

Jean Stuart, watching the square little back until it disappeared, was surprised to feel a lump rising in her throat.

CHAPTER XV

OUR WORK

On her return from the College, Miss Stuart was met at the Lawrences' door by Danny.

"I knew I'd see you when you came," he exulted. "Ruth said I'd be thinking of something else by that time and forget to be watching. Uncle Thor is here—up in Papa's study; and Papa said when you came, please to ask you please to go up and look at some plans."

"What kind of plans, and why do they want me? Come up to my room while I take off my hat, and tell me all you know about it."

"We-e-ell," said Danny, following her with a droll importance in every motion and inflection, and a very laborious pronunciation of the words evidently quoted from his elders, "We-e-ell, I guess it's for quarters at Akbar, 'cause I heard Uncle Thor say something like that. What a good example in 'rithmetic it would make, wouldn't it?" Danny paused to rub his lips together with a relish he always felt for any product of his active brain. "If a lady gives a thousand dollars, how many quarters does that make?"

"Child alive!" cried Miss Stuart, "what do you know about that thousand dollars? One would think it was a million!"

"Mamma said you gave it; and she pretty near cried when she told me. I asked her what Papa was thanking the Lord for so much at prayers the other morning. I never heard him thank Him so awfully much except after I fell off the roof and wasn't hurt except bumped a little.

You look all ready, I should think. I kind of like to see your hair mussed up all the time, now that I'm used to it. But Mamma never puts flour on her face. It seems wasteful, 'specially when you rub it all off again."

Jean caught the little fellow up, and stood him on the foot of the bed. "I've a great mind to run off with you," she said. "What do we care for plans or quarters or school or anything? I'll get a camel or two, and we'll just go galumphing over the desert till we come to a place where they fish for pearls, and then—"

Danny gave a sudden jerk and let himself fall down backward on the bed, kicking his heels in the air to prolong the bounce. "My, that was fun!" he exclaimed. "I never dared to do it before. But you make me feel all nice and tingly—as if I could do most anything. I think myself you're a pretty good teacher."

Jean's laughter rippled merrily out. "That's the first compliment I've had since I came here. You make me feel as if I were back in dear little old New York."

"Did you teach school in New York?"

"Mercy no!"

"Not even Sunday School?"

"Still less."

"That's one queer thing about you," Danny, seated Persian fashion on the bed, surveyed his teacher with the air of a judge in a juvenile court, "you don't seem to know much about Christianity. I should think you were a Moslem or something just as niggerent. When we read round at prayers the other day, you looked for John in the Old Testament. I saw you. Mary Freyer thinks we ought to pray for you to be converted." Jean started and opened her mouth, but Danny went right on talking. Jean closed her mouth so that the corners turned down a little and stood before the Court with hands meekly folded and the eyes of a child intent on further mischief. "Mary Freyer

wanted us to have a prayer-meeting every day at recess; but Edward Franklin got mad, and wouldn't tell us why, and went off saving something. I think it was 'Rot'; but I don't know what that means; and Sammy Whiting said he couldn't waste his recess prayin', and he went off; and Edith Franklin said she didn't think it would be very respectful to pray for our teacher behind her back; and Caroline said she never prayed except to her mother — but that isn't right, 'cause you pray to God, an' I told her so, and she began to cry; and then the bell rang, and when we came in you said we looked cold, and why hadn't we run around more? and you'd have to come out yourself and show us how to play games, and had we ever played Poison Tag? We-e-e-ll, I s'pose if you're ready, you'd better go along to Papa's study, but you're a nawfully interesting person to talk to. Did anybody else ever tell you that?"

Jean nodded. "In New York," she murmured.

"Well, I'm not the only one that thinks so here. I heard Mamma tell Papa that she never heard Uncle Thor talk so much as he did last Sunday at supper when you asked them about Russia and England. And Papa said, Well, he'd talked a good deal himself, and that it was easy enough to talk when any one listened as you did and kind of egged a fellow on, that's what he said. And Mamma said—"

"There, my boy," said Miss Stuart, coming to herself. "I wouldn't tell any more. You know it's never wise to repeat what people say; and besides, I must go to the study."

"Well, you did stop me just in time, if you like only compliments," said Danny, "for Mamma said—"

Jean held up her hand and then ran out of the room to keep from hearing any more. As she knocked at the study door she told herself, "That's the second time to-day that I've been almost more of a lady than the law demands."

A gruff voice called "Come in," and as Jean entered, a

stalwart person rose from the Morris chair with an energy that caused all its infirm joints to creak.

"So you've come at last," said the voice with its gruffness not very much diminished.

"Isn't Mr. Lawrence here? I understood he wanted me to look at some plans."

"I wanted you. I've been waiting hours. If I'm scalped on the way back to-night it will be your fault."

Jean laughed. "That's one thing I do know," she said. "Persians don't scalp. But if you must return to-night, perhaps we had better get to business at once."

"How do you know it's business?" said Thorley Prescott, with a kind of smile Miss Stuart had never before seen on his face. "How do you know I didn't ride down just for the pleasure of seeing your face?"

"Well," said Jean, "I should like to flatter myself, of course, but I happened to hear Mr. Lawrence say at breakfast that he was to help you to-day in the Treasury. Is he always the one that finishes up what the rest can't do?"

"That's about it."

"But what are your workmen doing at Akbar? I hear your old houses are full of them."

"Thirty-three, up to date. I left Freyer sitting on the lid."

"Is he good at that sort of thing? I should think he would be of more help in the Treasury."

A look of amusement spread over Prescott's face. "Got us all labelled and sorted, have you?"

Jean blushed. "Well, no," she said slowly, "not all of you."

Prescott laughed. "I'd give my old pipe to see your letters home," he said.

"That offer puts the climax on an overwhelming day. I have had," she counted them off on her fingers, "an invitation to lunch, two compliments from a pupil, and the

news that a prayer-meeting was all but formed for my exclusive benefit."

"A prayer-meeting! What in thunder!"

"No, in the Franklin's garden at recess."

"Oh, the children. I thought"—he paused, biting at his short mustache.

"You thought what?"

"Nothing."

He dived into his pocket and brought out a paper. "I thought you would like to see how the work is getting on. I told you we had thirty-three men. They are lodged in these old houses which we ourselves use in the summer." He showed her a sketch with three rectangles in a row, separated by spaces about twice the width of one rectangle.

"This," he went on, pointing to a rectangle at one end, "we use as a cook-house. The men eat downstairs, and for the present Freyer and I live in the second story. We're building walls to connect the three houses. In a couple of weeks, if the mild weather holds, we'll have lodgings for a hundred and fifty men." He joined the three rectangles with lines along their outer edges so that the whole figure was one large oblong divided into five parts.

"Then you'll have light and air only in front and back," remarked Jean. "Have you begun to build?"

"Oh yes, we've been at it since Tuesday morning early. To-morrow we hope to lay the poplar beams that form the second story."

"On both houses?" cried Jean. "How have you accomplished so much? How do they build these houses, anyway? I'd like to see them doing it."

"Well, you can," said Thorley. "To-morrow is Saturday. Dan says he and Mrs. Lawrence will bring you up to look over the whole thing. We're making a small reservoir; and I've got something to show you in the factory. High-

sounding word, isn't it? But I like to think of the place as a real plant."

Jean Stuart looked at the man in astonishment. His eyes glowed. His whole face and figure were alive with enthusiastic energy. It made her realize more than ever how dull his life must be. She could have cried at seeing him so transfigured by a chance to stand over a few vagabonds while they constructed a few hundred rough clay water-pipes. Here was a man with ability and ambition. She was sure of it. She would have it out of him why he stayed in this little uncivilized corner, constraining himself to jog at a footpace when he might be using the tremendous voltage of his personality to set thousands of men and millions of wheels in motion.

"Well," he said impatiently, "will you come up to-morrow?"

Jean started. "To see your work? I'd like to come very much. You're sure the Lawrences want to bring me? Why can't you leave Mr. Freyer sitting on the lid and go up with us yourself in the morning? Surely it's too dark now for a cautious man like you to venture."

Dan Lawrence opened the door and came in.

"Hi, Thorley," he said, "I'm glad you haven't started. It's much too late now."

Thorley rose and held out his hand to Miss Stuart. "I'll expect you in the morning," he said. "Dan, try to get an early start. Bring my father, if you can, but don't flood the party with females."

He turned again to Jean. "I wonder how you'll like a real Persian dinner. Well, good-by till to-morrow, and remember what you're coming to see is *OUR WORK*, all capitals, italicized."

CHAPTER XVI

THORLEY'S DIGGINGS

EVERY one in the Mission Station would have liked to inspect the work at Akbar. It was a little difficult to manage that those who needed the outing most, should be the ones to go. Not that anybody was selfish about it. On the contrary, with so many people, each wishing to give way to the others, it was difficult to make any arrangements; for nobody would believe that anybody else really wanted to stay at home.

It was necessary also that a great deal of work should be rearranged or put off. Some chores had actually to be finished Friday night, if Saturday were to be made into a holiday. Jean Stuart herself spent the evening darning the knees of Danny's stockings, though, as she smilingly said to herself, she had never before looked a darning-needle in the eye.

The sun of Saturday morning was only a little above the horizon when the Lawrences' buckboard started from the Mission Compound in the city. Mrs. Lawrence drove, with Mr. John Prescott beside her. Behind them were Amy Lea and Roger Standish. Dan, on his old gray horse, escorted Miss Stuart, who was delighted to find that Lord Chesterton was recovering all the friskiness he had seemed to leave behind him when he entered Persia.

At the College they were surprised to be met by Dr. Franklin with an outrider.

"I have to go over to Sawam," explained the doctor. "There's a fellow over there with a broken hip — Yedgar,

the son of our old Bible woman. You know him, Dan — 1 thought I might as well ride along with you folks. Perhaps, if urged, I'll come back and join you at dinner."

It was a merry party that rode to the mountain that day. Their work had been left behind; the day was beautiful; their horses were fresh; the road over which they were travelling was the best in that part of Persia; and they were going to see something perfectly new and very, very comforting. For the beginning of the work at Akbar was relief as much to the spirits of the missionaries as to the bodily needs of the refugees.

They had crossed the river twice and were about to begin their struggle with the last ford, which was a very treacherous one, when, high up on the mountain before them, they heard a shout.

"It's Thorley," declared Mr. Prescott. "He may bring down dirt and stones enough to give us a dry crossing."

"Aren't you afraid to have him ride that way?" asked Amy Lea.

Mr. Prescott laughed. "Well, I've had nearly thirty years to get used to it. Thorley began to ride almost before he could walk."

"Good morning," cried the horseman, galloping down to the river, and plunging through it. "Nice day, isn't it? Glad to see you." His glance had taken in the whole party, but as he made the last remark, his eyes rested on Jean Stuart. "Well, aren't you coming across?" he continued. "Come on, Dan, we horsemen will go down to the other ford. I dare you to cross there, Miss Stuart. Your horse may have to swim for a yard or two."

It was Amy Lea who almost fell into the river in her fear lest the others might get wet; and when they reached the premises at Akbar Mrs. Lawrence found that the girl's feet were wet because she had forgotten to lift them from the bottom of the buckboard. Margaret Lawrence could not help wishing that her conscience had allowed her to bring Willie Trench instead of this careless child. Amy had been chosen, because it was her first year on the Mission field and her older colleagues were in the habit of planning for her to have as much diversion as possible. They saw that without it, her intense nature would not be able to resist the melancholy of the sights and sounds which she was facing for the first time. The making of young missionaries depends far more on their seniors than the youngsters ever know as long as they are youngsters; and it is a process that calls for infinite patience and self-denial on the part of the seniors. So Margaret Lawrence thought as she insisted that Amy's shoes and stockings be thoroughly dried before she ventured outdoors again. And Amy was just as peevish about it as if she had never dreamt of being a missionary. It was Iean Stuart who came to the rescue with extra shoes and stockings, which, remembering the exigencies of her journey, she had brought up in her saddle-bags.

Thorley Prescott, meanwhile, was fuming with impatience. He had begun to snort even when Mr. Freyer, meeting the party at the door of the cook-house, with his precise New England hospitality, suggested that the ladies might like to go upstairs for a few minutes to adjust themselves.

"What are they doing," Thorley demanded of Dan Lawrence, "when they all get together in a room and you can't hear anything but talk?"

Dan shrugged his shoulders.

"Thorley," he said with his tolerant smile, "you have a lot to learn."

"Well, you don't seem to have learned much. Don't you know what they do? Is it all talk?"

"No matter what they do," Dan answered, "or what they don't do, the one thing a fellow has to learn is simply this: to wait."

"Well, I'll be doggoned," said Thorley Prescott, "if any woman will ever teach me that."

Mr. Freyer looked rather shocked; but Dan heard the outcome of Thorley's speech with relief that it was no more violent. He turned aside to watch the workmen who were building the wall between the cook-house and the dormitory next to it.

"I planned to have her see those last bricks go into place," grumbled Thorley at his elbow, "but I can't have the work kept back, even for her. Well, vou're here at last, are you?" The three ladies were just emerging from the door of the cook-house. It should have been perfectly clear to which of them Thorley's remark was addressed; but Amy Lea immediately drowned it in a flood of apologies, and Jean Stuart went quickly over to Mr. Freyer, whose meat and drink it was to impart information. She began asking him how the mud bricks were made that were being mortared now into the walls of the dwelling. He showed her the wooden mould into which the mud was poured and mixed with straw. He showed her the large bricks set up on their ends to dry, and was about to point out the poplar beams which would be laid across the walls in a few minutes to form the floor of the second story.

"Mr. Freyer," said a voice behind him, "Miss Lea would like you to explain to her how brick is made."

Mr. Freyer jumped a little as he turned around. There was Thorley Prescott with Amy Lea still talking at his elbow. Mr. Freyer, with a glance of regret at the tall stranger whose intelligent listening he was beginning to value, stirred up a fresh puddle of imaginary mud and tried to go with the same enthusiasm into the process of mixing and moulding it. But there was something lacking. The little man began to realize vaguely that the joy of imparting information depended somewhat on the attitude of the recipient. It was easier, for instance, to answer one ques-

tion at a time, and really almost unpleasant to have a careful answer cut off by a new and irrelevant question. Mr. Freyer drew a breath of relief when Roger Standish came up with a home-made conundrum which he and Miss Lea found exquisitely funny.

Meanwhile Thorley Prescott and Jean Stuart were on their way to the "factory." Dan and his wife and Mr. John Prescott followed them.

"Who protects you from your workmen?" asked Jean, as a fierce-looking fellow passed her, his girdle bristling with knives and daggers. "Really, I'd be afraid to stay here."

Thorley laughed. "Yet you travelled alone with —"

Jean held up her hand. "That's just why I'm afraid. And don't you ever say his name to me again. I shudder every time I think of him, and I don't want to be reminded. Now tell me, why isn't it dangerous for you to be up here practically alone with these perfectly horrible creatures?"

Thorley laughed again.

"I intend to ask your father," said Jean.

"Not now," answered Thorley. "I'm going to show you," his face was lighted with triumph, "I'm going to show you the first closed water-pipe ever made in this part of Persia."

"It marks a new era, I suppose," said Jean, trying to share his joy.

"It ought to," declared Thorley, "a pure-water supply, contented workmen, a self-supporting industry. These things aren't as small as they look to a capitalist like you."

Jean, who had intended him not to see that she considered his affairs small, followed him meekly, as he entered the low shed and crossed the very slippery floor of wet clay.

"Here," he said, picking up something which he held as tenderly in his arms as if it were alive, "please take off the cloth yourself." Jean, thinking of her gloves, but scorning to seem gingerly, grasped the damp and not too dainty cloth, and beheld in Thorley's arms a rough, wet, and somewhat crooked waterpipe.

"You shall be the one to fire it," cried Thorley, and he handed it to her as if it were a new-born infant. It flashed through Jean's mind that it would be a long time before she could replace her riding habit. Moreover, she had no idea what demand the process of firing would make on her powers.

"Oh, how perfectly lovely," cried a voice behind her. "Do you know how to fire pipes, Miss Stuart, and do you know just how it was made and all about it?"

"I should say," answered Miss Stuart, "that I know probably just about as much as you do. What would happen to it, Mr. Prescott, if I should hold it off, very carefully, of course, with my two hands instead of embracing it bodily as you do?"

Thorley Prescott shouted with laughter. He put the water-pipe back into its place and covered it up.

"Aren't you going to fire it?" asked Amy Lea.

"Not to-day," said Thorley. "Now let's go and see the reservoir."

"Why do you build a reservoir now?" asked Mr. Prescott. "I should think you had enough on your hands."

"It's now or never," answered Thorley. "The ground may freeze hard any night. If I can get a pipe-line from the springs to the factory, we'll have running water to wet the clay and save hours of carrying."

"Miss Oddfellow," said Margaret Lawrence, "is praying for a continuance of the warm weather."

"That shows a beautiful spirit," declared Mr. Prescott.
"The dear old lady was heartbroken to have a thousand dollars given outright, and all of it used for what she calls material purposes." He lowered his voice so as not to be

heard by his son or Miss Stuart, who were again leading the way, this time to the reservoir.

"Great Scott, Thor!" exclaimed Dan Lawrence, when they had climbed the mountain a little way and had reached the place where a gang of men were digging. "I had no idea these springs of ours amounted to so much."

"Neither had the man that sold them to us," laughed Thorley, "or we never should have gotten them."

"Just think," added Dan Lawrence hastily, watching Mr. Freyer's expression, "of the good we can do in the city, if only we can get this water down there."

"This is about the place, Dan," broke in Thorley, "where I thought of setting up a circular shovel. What do you say?" He jumped into the diggings as he spoke, and Dan Lawrence jumped after him, followed in a moment by Mr. Prescott. The others stood above them on the slippery bank.

Jean Stuart liked watching the three men. It was easy to see that Thorley Prescott knew just what he was doing when he undertook the tasks of an engineer. His words were few and not very technical. In a minute he had made his whole idea plain, not only to his comrades in the hole, but to his listener on the bank. The rest of the audience dwindled away. Amy Lea and Roger Standish, talking earnestly, wandered together up the mountain. Mr. Freyer, finding that Miss Stuart did not hear the information he was dispensing, suggested to Mrs. Lawrence that it was cold standing in the mud, and that perhaps some one had better see what the cook was about.

"Well, Thor," said Dan, "I don't find any flaw in your plans. The next thing is to get that circular shovel working. Let's go at it right off."

A few pails, some rope, and a pulley or two were collected. The men were sent hither and thither, the gentlemen took off their coats, and worked and shouted and perspired. In

an hour or two the workers in the hole were all very muddy, and the spectator on the bank was pretty well chilled through; but the circular shovel was working.

"Hooray!" yelled Thorley, throwing up his cap; and happening to lift his eyes at the same time, he beheld Jean Stuart still on the bank above him.

"I'd forgotten all about you," he cried. "Aren't you cold?" "Well, yes," said Jean, "but it's very entertaining to see modern machinery created out of Oriental chaos."

Thorley, slipping back at every step, managed to climb out of the hole.

"It's good of you to be interested," he said, almost humbly. "You deserve a reward. I guess I'll have to take you to the best place in all Persia."

Mr. Freyer had been picking his way toward them around the reservoir, until he stood on a very insecure stone with Dan Lawrence between him and Miss Stuart. His shrill voice was a surprise to them all; for they had not seen him coming.

"Miss Stuart," he said, "it would give me pleasure to show you a very beautiful view which can be reached by a somewhat difficult path. I believe with my assistance you would find it not too fatiguing. May I have the honor of escorting you?"

"Miss Stuart is going with me," said Thorley Prescott, barely waiting for the little man's speech to be finished.

Mr. Freyer, with polite expressions of regret, turned immediately away, and was teetering back across the stones before Jean had decided just what she would say to him.

"Mr. Freyer," she called, but Mr. Freyer was hard of hearing, and went on conscientiously picking his way, though his shoes, which he loved to keep nice, were already as muddy as they could well be.

Jean stood looking after him, with a comical feeling of hesitation.

"Well, are you coming?" said Thorley Prescott. "My path is no path at all, but I guess I can pull you up the worst places. Dan, see if you can keep Freyer away from the cook. The dinner will be better. Miss Stuart, you'll have to jump across this spring." He held out his hand, but Jean, disregarding it, turned to Mr. Lawrence.

"Please tell your wife," she said, "that because of my 'satiable curtiosity' I am turning my back on a manifest duty. This man should be taught that no woman prefers a command to a request. Did I ever say I would go with you to the best place in all Persia?" She smiled teasingly at Thorley.

"I don't know what you are talking about," said that gentleman. "You can explain it as we go along. Goodby, Dan."

Miss Stuart jumped across the spring; and Dan Lawrence turned away chuckling.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BEST PLACE IN ALL PERSIA

"DID I say too much?" asked Thorley Prescott.

Miss Stuart did not speak. She did not even look at him; but he was satisfied. They were standing on the roof of a little cabin built high up on the side of Mt. Akbar. The cabin was hidden to the roof by a dense growth of low alders. Immediately below, so that it seemed as if a stone could be dropped down on them, were the buildings of the Mission. The premises were outlined by a high mud wall which, far to the right, extended itself in a queer circular formation to enclose a group of little white stones that were shut off from the rest of the premises by a hedge of poplar and a wicket gate. This enclosure contained the graves of the missionaries and their children who had died in the service. Iean turned her eves away from the little white stones as soon as she could. She found the track which the buckboard had made that morning and followed it from the gate down to that last ford in the river. Then she pursued the windings of the river in and out and around, until suddenly, her glance swept around a great silver curve and leaped to the city wall. Then all Muramna lay spread before her. She could see the dome of the old church just opposite the gate of the Mission Compound. She found herself looking for the top of the press building, but that she preferred after all not to see on this holiday, and her gaze wandered to the blue waters of the lake which twinkled in the sunlight outside the southern wall of Muramna, stretching eastward and southward as far as the eye could see. Up the borders of the lake and on the mountain between the plain and the city were scattered little villages, collections of mud hovels, squalid enough when one was near them, but sightly as they lay with miles of golden sunshine between them and the eye of the beholder. Jean Stuart's glance rested happily on each little village; and Thorley Prescott, watching her, was glad that she could not know yet of all the misery that was hidden under that picturesque mud.

"They shan't tell her the horrors, if I can help it," he growled fiercely to himself. Then, remembering how helpless he was to protect her from the combined tongue and conscience of the Mission circle, he sighed so heavily that she turned on him in astonishment.

"I want you to see what makes this the best place in all Persia. Turn around, please." He led her to the other side of the roof and made her stand on the very edge. There to the westward, just over the spur of Akbar, he showed her a sight that took away her breath. There, row on row, rank behind rank, stood the purple mountains of Kurdistan, so vivid that the hands of the spirit could reach out and touch their white summits. Yet their splendor made them as awe-inspiring as the thought of heaven, and they seemed as infinitely far away in the enchantment of their color and the majesty of their forms.

There was a long silence, while Jean looked at the mountains and Thorley did not. At last Jean spoke softly.

"You are good to show me this. I'm glad you have it all for your very own."

"I have never shown it to any one else," he answered.

"But the cabin? Is that yours, too?"

"Yes. I built it myself last autumn when I stayed here alone. If the workmen prove trustworthy, I shall live here through the winter."

"With Mr. Freyer?"

"No. Freyer and Standish will be going to their Station soon. They're waiting only for letters from the Board."

"And will you like to stay here all alone through the bleak winter with the cold sifting in through the pores of this cabin, and never a human being within call, who isn't bristling with hair and daggers?"

Thorley turned away, saying in a disgusted tone, "You looked as if you liked it."

"I do like it," said Jean. "Is it safe to sit on this roof?"

"Wait a minute," he answered, vanishing down the ladder, and coming up again instantly with a camp stool. Jean seated herself where she could still see the tops of those delectable mountains. Thorley sat on the edge of the roof swinging his feet.

"This is what I call playing 'hookey,'" he said. "If you had gone walking with Freyer he would have told you the exact height of every one of those peaks."

"Yes, and you might have been discussing the ethical significance of the modern novel."

Prescott laughed. "Oh, no," he said, "she doesn't try it on with me."

"She doesn't dare," said Jean. "You know you're a very alarming person."

"Then why aren't you afraid of me?"

"I am. There's a question I'm dying to ask, but the very thought of facing you with it makes me palpitate with fear."

"Humph!" said Thorley Prescott. He had seen her when she was really frightened, and he remembered that she had not talked then about being afraid. "Well, go ahead."

"Where?"

"Ask your question."

"You give me full permission, and you promise faithfully not to scowl at me?"

"Go ahead."

"It's a question that shows me in the most unpleasant light, as just a plain inquisitive female."

Thorley looked up with a gleam of fun. "Does that call for a pretty speech from me?"

"Yes," answered Jean, clapping her hands. "I'll bet you anything you don't know how to make one."

Thorley looked straight at her, smiling from the very bottom of his eyes. "Are you going to ask that question?" he demanded.

"Let's change the subject," said Jean. "I want to tell you something. I started round the world to see if I could find more than one contented man."

"Had you found one?"

"I thought I had, and I wanted to be sure. Now I am sure. Would you like to know who the man is?"

"That's easy."

"You believe, then, that he really loves the life here with all its deprivations? He must be homesick for America at times. He must regret all the comforts that he cannot give his family. He must hate to see his wife working so hard, and later he will have to face the thought of sending his children away. There will be years of separation. Perhaps neither Ruth nor Danny will ever come back to live in his home again. I call it a life of unmitigated self-sacrifice."

"Did you ever call it so to him?"

"Do you know," Jean answered, "I didn't dare. I have an idea he wouldn't like it."

Prescott chuckled. "I heard some one use that word to him just once."

"What did he say?"

"I wish I could tell you. I wish I could even give you an idea how he looked. I tell you there were sparks in those nice gray eyes of his. 'Self-sacrifice,' he said, 'I don't

like to hear that word mentioned in connection with a missionary's life. Any one who thinks of it that way had better stay at home.' He admitted that there were things a missionary had to give up, but — and then how his face shone! Dan isn't much of a talker. He doesn't need to talk. His life says it all, and the way he looks while he is doing his work."

Jean Stuart had never but once heard so many words together from the lips of Thorley Prescott. It was good to see his face glow as he talked of his friend.

"Do you know why he feels this way?" she asked.

"Why, yes. He believes that the Lord has put him here."

"Do you?"

"Do I what?"

"Do you believe that the Lord puts men in places?"

A grim smile twitched at the corners of Thorley's mouth. "Look here," he said, "if you're inquiring about matters of religion, don't apply to me. Ask Dan."

"I am asking you. You said I might ask you questions."
"That's woman all over. She says question and then she says she said questions. Well go ahead. Please restate Number One."

"No," said Jean, "now I'm going to ask the real one that I've been driving at all along. You are not contented here, as your friend Mr. Lawrence is. There are splendid big things that you could do out in the world, and you could accomplish more than most men. Why don't you drop all this and get right at the thing you were fitted for? I know lots of people that could help you and be proud of you afterwards."

While she was speaking Prescott had risen. Now he stood squarely on his feet looking down at her with an expression which she could not read. He was not angry, she thought, nor contemptuous, nor did he show the faintest sign of gratification at her interest in his career. He remained perfectly

when at last he spoke, his voice was husky and very deep.
"The answer," he said, "can all be summed up in just two words: My mother!"

This time Jean kept the silence, and after another long moment he went on. "She gave me to the Lord when I was born. Named me Samuel and told me why before I could talk plain. I always said I wanted to be a soldier, and she would answer, 'A soldier of the Cross, dear little Samuel.' But I never gave in. Not until she lay dying, and then I couldn't refuse to promise. So here I am."

As he finished, a very bitter smile distorted his face. "And even you can see at the first glance that I'm a failure."

Jean Stuart was appalled. There was despair in the face before her — despair for which she knew no remedy. It had come over her while the man was speaking, that once he had given his promise, nothing would ever tear him away from keeping it. Yet for the life of her she could not help saying, "But if your mother could see you now, she would not want you to keep that promise."

He turned on her angrily. "Never say that to me again," he thundered.

Jean rose and faced him. "I will say it," she insisted. "You have no right to keep a promise that is spoiling your whole life. No other man I know would be so foolish or so wicked."

Two pairs of fearless eyes glared into each other. Prescott's were the first to soften. Impulsively he held out both hands.

"I like you!" he cried, "and you shall ask me as many questions as you want."

She put out her right hand and gave his one good hearty grip. "That's a bargain," she said, "and now let's go down to dinner. They've been ringing a bell ever so long from the roof of the cook-house."

CHAPTER XVIII

A DINNER WITHOUT DESSERT

IF Prescott and Miss Stuart were late, they were not the only delinquents. Standish and Miss Lea had not been seen since they left the reservoir, when Margaret Lawrence had noticed that they walked off together in the direction of the westward gate; but Dr. Franklin, who had visited his patient in Sawam, declared that when he had ridden through the gate not ten minutes ago, he had seen no sign of any one. Thorley Prescott sent men outside the gate to watch. Then he suggested rather irascibly that those present begin dinner at once.

"You ordered the meal served native fashion, Thor," said Dan Lawrence, "so, when in your absence Mr. Freyer consulted me, I suggested that the cloth be laid on the floor. There was no table large enough. Besides, Margaret and I thought that the experience of an orthodox Persian dinner might be entertaining to your guests."

"Much obliged," said Thorley, "more entertaining than comfortable, but she may like it."

Dan laughed. "I said guests," he remarked; but Thorley paid no attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he called, "please come out to dinner."

Miss Stuart was invited to seat herself on the floor between Thorley Prescott and Dan Lawrence. Before her was a somewhat dingy cotton cloth covered with large and gaudy representations of horses, men, altars, bloody sacrifices and other emblems more sacred, perhaps, than appetizing. The

129

cloth, fortunately, was well covered with coarse dishes full of queer concoctions. At each end was a pile of native bread in sheets the size of a dinner plate. It had been made

by slapping heated dough on hot stones.

"Are you going to sit Persian fashion, Miss Stuart?" asked John Prescott across the cloth. He himself had bent his knees and was squatting back on his heels, as were all the others, excepting Mrs. Lawrence, who was more comfortable with her legs crossed in the Turkish fashion which she had learned as a child in Syria.

"Better not try it," admonished Dan Lawrence, "or if

you do, not for long."

"Ha, ha," laughed Dr. Franklin, "that's right. First time I sat on my heels through a Persian dinner I fell on my face among the sweetmeats when I tried to get up."

Miss Stuart had had enough of it already. "It hurts," she remarked, but she found another way to crouch more easily on the floor and refused the cushion which Dan offered her.

"What are we doing with knives and forks and plates, Thor?" demanded Mr. Prescott, after the blessing had been asked at some length by Mr. Freyer.

"I didn't order them," said Thorley.

"Don't the natives use them?" asked Miss Stuart. "What do they use? Not chop-sticks?"

Every one laughed but Thorley, who said with a genial smile, "What a loss it will be to us all when you lose your ignorance."

She leaned toward him, murmuring under cover of the renewed burst of hilarity, "Isn't it barely possible that I may have come to the same conclusion?" Then, without waiting for an answer, she called to Mr. Freyer, who sat at the other end of the cloth, "What is this delicious object? I'm sure you will help me. Up here they are all so busy making fun of me that I don't get any information at all."

Mr. Freyer beamed as he replied, "It is dolma—d-o-l-m-a. It consists of a cucumber stuffed with forcemeat and boiled. The preparation of the forcemeat is, I believe, rather complicated. Perhaps it can best be explained by one of the home-making sex." He turned deferentially to Mrs. Lawrence at his right, but Mr. John Prescott broke in before she could respond, "This is the way the natives eat it." He took up his cucumber in his fingers, dipped it into a boat of white gravy that stood near him, and began eating it as a schoolboy eats an apple.

Dr. Franklin nudged Dan Lawrence. "John's broken loose," he muttered. "I haven't seen him act like that since he married the present Mrs. P."

The doctor put one large brown hand on the cloth and, stretching himself across it, insinuated a huge morsel from his own plate into the unreceptive mouth of Thorley Prescott. "That should have gone to you as guest of honor, Miss Stuart," he explained, "but I thought you would rather receive it by proxy." He subsided into his place, and Thorley, catching the expression on Miss Stuart's face, burst out laughing.

"Tell me," he said, "did you never see your muleteers eat?"
"Oh, yes, but that was on the journey. Sometimes I myself had to eat with my fingers. One does that even at home on a picnic; but the food which the muleteers had was not difficult, like these — dolmas? and they never fed each other. Is it only among people of rank that this pleasing generosity is the custom?" This question was directed to Dr. Franklin.

"I forbid you to answer her," exclaimed Thorley Prescott. "She'll write down what you say and put it in a book."

"I write a book on Persia?" Jean's face sparkled, and her merry laugh rang out.

"A little later, possibly. More likely you have begun already."

"Yes. I put down all the hotels and starred them the very night I came; and I made an awfully interesting footnote about the language used by missionaries when dismissing couriers."

"What's that?" asked Dr. Franklin, while Thorley began somewhat uneasily to search his memory.

But now the cook stalked proudly in with a dish containing a brown mess, in consistency very much like first-class glue. Another servant followed, bearing on a platter a high mound of white rice.

"Oh, oh!" cried Jean, "I'm just positive that's the kind of *pilau* that has eggs hidden in it. Now, let's see how you eat that!"

"Thank you," said Prescott. "Haresa is good enough for me," and he helped himself liberally to the brown glue. "I dare you to eat it as I do," he added mockingly. Jean broke off deliberately a piece of her sheet of bread, formed it into a sort of shovel, dipped up with it some of the brown mixture out of the common bowl, moistened the whole with melted butter, also out of a common dish, and, tilting her head far back, dropped the morsel neatly into her mouth which closed as smilingly over it as if it had been introduced by the latest thing in forks. Margaret Lawrence clapped her hands, and was imitated by all the men except Thorley Prescott, who said, "You left out the coriander seed."

Jean wrinkled up her nose. "That's one thing I know enough to avoid. It may be scriptural, as Mr. Freyer says; but it's very nasty. I like the glue. How did you say it was made?"

"Of chicken and wheat," responded Mr. Freyer, hurriedly deciding that this was not the moment to speak of Miss Stuart's light allusion to the Word of God. He promised himself a long and earnest talk with her one of these days and rather regretted that his work would take him so soon away from Muramna. Meanwhile he went on with ex-

planations. "The fowl is boiled, together with grains of entire wheat, and without any salt whatever, for forty-eight hours at least."

"How interesting," said Jean, very graciously. It was borne in upon her by this time that Thorley Prescott scowled whenever she applied for information to the other end of the table; so she was hunting about in her mind for another question when the door from the hall opened suddenly. Roger Standish burst into the room, half carrying Miss Lea, who hung on his arm pale and breathless. When Mrs. Lawrence ran up to her, she promptly fainted. Margaret and Dr. Franklin caught her and laid her on the divan; while Dan Lawrence wet his handkerchief, giving it to his wife, before he hurried away to get a glass of fresh water. Meanwhile Standish was gasping:—

"Outside the walls — up north by those hummocks — the bullet grazed my hair — I got her home as soon as I could — but the fellow you sent after us —"

"He shot at you?" said Thorley. "Nonsense!"

"No, no. Another fellow in a green turban — from behind the hummock. He ran when he saw your fellow coming — I'm afraid —"

"Whom did you send, Thor?"

"Isaac of Arawan, a brave man," said Thorley, catching up his riding-whip and making for the door. "Lead on, Standish. Ready, Dan?"

"Wait for me," said Mr. Freyer, hunting distractedly for his hat. His beard quivered, but he was afraid only of being left behind. John Prescott was already half-way down the stairs.

"There, ladies," said Dr. Franklin, catching up the poker, "you know more about this kind of patient than I do. She'll come around; give her time and water." His last words were shouted from below.

Jean Stuart went to the window and looked after the five

men. She could see Dan and Thorley running ahead, with Standish between them. Mr. John Prescott and Mr. Freyer, who had found his hat, were close behind them; but the doctor, in trying to catch up with them, had already lost his breath and was puffing along several paces in the rear.

Miss Lea was soon able to give her version of the adventure. "We were outside the walls," she said plaintively (Mrs. Lawrence bit her lip and tried not to frown at the girl), "when we heard a gunshot. The bullet came very near; and the next second we saw a man running away from behind a hummock."

"What kind of man?" said Miss Stuart.

"A little, small, brown man in a green turban. That's all I could see of him, I was so frightened." The girl began to whimper.

"There, never mind," said Jean. "Don't talk any more now. Lie still and let me smooth your hair."

"He screamed terribly as he ran away," sobbed Amy. "It sounded as if he were saying things to us in English, —bad things, you know."

"Could you hear any of the words?" asked Mrs. Lawrence.

"I—I don't really know," quavered Miss Lea, "though the last word sounded like," she lowered her voice to a horrified whisper, "damn," she breathed, hiding her face in the pillow and shuddering from head to foot.

Jean Stuart suppressed a smile. When Amy emerged from the cushions, it was to murmur, "Roger was so brave. He brought me right home without once stopping. I should have fainted long before, if he hadn't made me come along. Roger is so brave." Then it came to her that she had called him "Roger," and she began to blush.

At this point Thorley Prescott dashed into the room, carrying two of the thin poplar poles that were to be used for the new roofs.

"I want that cover," he cried, seizing a corner of the Bagdad which was over the couch. Miss Lea, with Jean's help, removed herself just in time to keep from being deposited on the floor. "Dan," as Mr. Lawrence came breathlessly into the room, "double this cloth while I get hammer and nails."

Thorley then left the room. Dan Lawrence whispered to his wife, as they folded the Bagdad, that Isaac had been found slightly wounded and that he and Thorley were going out to bring him back to the house. Thorley quickly came back with hammer and nails. By tacking the Bagdad to the poplar poles, a rude stretcher was rapidly made, both men working at once, with Margaret and Jean handing them nails.

"Have you bandages?" asked Jean.

"In the doctor's case," said Thorley. "Please find it."

Jean did find it hidden away in the doctor's saddle-bags, which he had thrown behind the door.

"What bed shall we get ready?" asked Margaret.

"In that room," said Thorley, pointing with one hand while with the other he grasped an end of the finished stretcher and followed Dan to the door.

"Oh, tell me," cried Amy Lea, running after them, "is there any more danger?"

Jean took hold of her and pushed her into a chair. "You sit there," she said, "and keep still. Now, Mrs. Lawrence, where shall we find the sheets for that bed?"

The bed was ready by the time the gentlemen returned carrying the wounded man. Hot water was ready also, and absorbent cotton and stimulants, as well as more bandages, though when and how the two ladies found these things they were never able to tell.

"I say, Dan," announced Dr. Franklin, when the patient was resting comfortably in his clean bed, "your wife and that girl are a team of thoroughbreds."

"You mean Miss Lea?" said Dan with one eye on Thorley.

The doctor snorted. "The kindest thing to be said about her," he remarked, "is in Syriac. She is not yet cooked."

Thorley Prescott growled. "Standish, too," he declared. "What a pair of young fools! I told 'em to stay inside the walls."

"By the way," said Dr. Franklin, "you'd better be getting these ladies home. Dan, you tell Kate that I'm spending the night. Better not say much about the accident until I get home. Oh, no," in reply to a question from Thorley Prescott, "the injury doesn't amount to much. You and Freyer could look after it as well as I. Clean wound in the fleshy part of the leg. Artery severed, but that's all. Only possible complications might arise from poverty of blood. The man's a skeleton. Plucky beggar, though, which always helps."

"With your permission," said Dan, "I'll go and tell Margaret. She'll be relieved, and I'll see that they get ready to start for home. You don't think that fellow is likely to waylay us, Thor?"

"He ran off up the mountain," said Thorley. "One of the other men I sent out followed him along behind the hummocks and watched him enter the trail to Sawam. He can't get back without passing here, and I've set watchmen by the walls."

"That's all right, then," said Dan, leaving the hall where the three men had been talking, and going to find the ladies.

Thorley was about to follow Dan when the doctor caught him by the sleeve.

"Say, Thor," he said, "you want to look out for yourself. That fellow, I judge, was after you."

Thorley looked uncomfortably at the floor. "Just keep still about it, Doctor."

"That's all right," said the doctor. "Keeping still won't mend it."

"Oh, pshaw!" Thorley impatiently pulled his sleeve away.

Dr. Franklin took a firmer hold "Now, Thorley," he said, "you have no right to be a fool. You've been cooked this many a year. Standish swears he heard the man say, 'BlackBrescotthedamn!"

Thorley faced the doctor squarely. "You may trust me, Uncle Harry," he said. "I intend to be deucedly prudent, only don't talk before the ladies or my father."

"Ah, ha," said the doctor, and whatever he meant by that exclamation, he kept it to himself.

Thorley opened the door into the dining-room. "Ladies, are you ready?" he called. "The cavalcade starts in ten minutes." He went over to Miss Stuart.

"I'm sorry not to be going back with you," he said. "Your holiday has been spoiled."

"As if that mattered," she answered quickly. "I'm glad the man is not seriously hurt. Have you any idea who the assailant was and what he wanted?"

All who heard the question strained their ears for the answer. But Miss Lea and Roger Standish, conferring together in a corner, their relish for each other's society increased by the feeling that they were both blamed for the late accident, — Miss Lea and Roger Standish heard neither Miss Stuart's question nor the answer which Thorley gave promptly with a short laugh. "Oh, just some fellow who wanted a dinner and was taking potluck. Pretty good joke, Dan. Potluck! Better write it down in the annals of the Mission." He laughed again, hoping that Dan, at least, would join him. But Dan had left the room; and a dead silence fell as soon as Thorley had finished. Out of it rose the earnest voice of Amy Lea.

"Hadji Husain!" she exclaimed, "you think it was he? But why? Who is he?"

Jean Stuart had scarcely time to turn pale, before Prescott had leaped across the room to Standish.

"You damn liar!" he cried, seizing the boy by the shoulders, and shaking him as a big dog shakes a little one, "you promised me not to tell."

"Take it back!" Standish gasped, trying to use his fists. "No fellow calls me a liar without having his face punched for it."

Amy Lea dropped into a chair and wondered if she were going to faint again. Margaret Lawrence looked around for her husband, while Mr. Freyer, seeing that his frantic advice had no effect on the assailants, ran to find Dr. Franklin. Then Jean Stuart, still very white, walked up to the two men, and put her hand on Thorley Prescott's arm.

"Aren't you ashamed?" she said quietly. "You're acting like a great big bully."

Thorley's hands dropped at his sides. He turned to face Jean, his whole face quivering.

"I wouldn't have had you know this for the world," he said, and he threw back his head and clenched his fists. "Not that there's a word of truth in it," he declared; "anybody who says so, is a liar!"

"How silly you are!" Jean answered. "No one would have paid any attention to this rumor, if you hadn't confirmed it by getting so excited. I think you said we were to start in ten minutes. Unless you hurry you won't have time to beg Mr. Standish's pardon."

"And he swore at him," sobbed Amy Lea; "even if he does beg his pardon, how can a Christian forgive such a thing from a fellow-missionary?"

A faint smile lit up the gloom of Thorley Prescott's face, and found an answer in the eyes of Roger Standish. The two men stepped toward each other and shook hands.

"I apologize," said Thorley, in his gruffest voice, while Roger burst into a torrent of speech in which excuses were very freely mingled with such expressions as, "That's all right, old fellow. Don't say another word about it."

Now Dan returned with news that the buckboard and horses were ready. He had not heard the quarrel between Prescott and Standish, but he knew as soon as he entered the room that something was the matter.

"Friends," he said, holding up his hand, "we have to thank our Heavenly Father for a great deliverance. Before we separate, shall we just join in a word of prayer?" and the simple words that followed drove out from every heart all feelings but those of grave thankfulness. Yet the little procession started back to the city in spirits very different from those of the morning. Misfortune had been their host that day, and Foreboding travelled back with them to their homes.

"Please be careful," said Jean, as Thorley helped her into the saddle. "Prayers for your safety are all very well; but if you should be imprudent now and anything should happen, I could never forgive myself."

"Nothing that has happened," he said firmly, "has been your fault in the slightest degree. You have been entirely a blessing to us all — especially to me." Again his eyes spoke more eloquently than his tongue, and he held her hand for an instant in both of his.

"He meant the money," she told herself as she picked her way down the mountain; but he did not mean the money; and she knew it even better than he did.

CHAPTER XIX

DIPLOMACY

Dr. Franklin settled down into the well-worn hollow of his easy-chair, tired out after a most perplexing week. Several days had passed since Isaac of Arawan had been shot. The wound was healing, and the man was both patient and grateful. He was the least of Dr. Franklin's perplexities.

Nothing more had been heard of the rascal in the green turban, though Thorley Prescott had ridden out after him as soon as the Lawrence buckboard was out of sight. Thorley had traced him until his tracks were lost in a mountain brook, then very reluctantly he had been obliged to give it up. When Dr. Franklin scolded him for exposing himself, the Thunderer replied:—

"If it's Husain, I promised him a whipping in case he ever bothered us again. Besides, I took a couple of fellows with me."

This was the beginning of the worry which had tired Dr. Franklin out. All the week he and the other gentlemen had been working to make the Governor realize that he must protect the American citizens in Muramna against this unknown enemy of theirs. Dr. Lawrence and his son had ridden to the Governor's palace as soon as Dan returned from Akbar on the afternoon of the shooting. But the Governor had retired to his anderoon. It was not until Monday that the Lawrences obtained an audience, and then they came away with very little satisfaction. Dr. Franklin had been present. He shook his head now as he thought over the interview. The Governor had been very agreeable. He

had welcomed his dear *Inglesi* with many compliments. He was desolated at the thought that danger had come near to them; indeed, it had made him so ill that he must ask the *Hakim Saib* to feel his pulse; but *inshallah*, what could he do? *Kismet*. The will of Allah must be accomplished, even though it grieved the affections of the Governor. Oh yes, he could send men after the Hadji, but what would that accomplish? For what reason should he punish him, if caught? No harm had as yet been done.

Dr. Lawrence reminded His Excellency that one of his subjects, a faithful and innocent man, had been painfully wounded, but the Governor knowing the religion of his faithful subject, shrugged his shoulders and muttered some proverb that had to do with "the blood of a dog." The only bright spot in the interview, Dr. Franklin thought, had been Dan Lawrence's way with the Governor. Dan had the patience which comes only after years of Oriental He was not uneasy while the Governor was smoking his narghileh. He could sit quietly with folded hands, the friendly smile deepening from time to time in his gray eyes. His was the charity which extends not only to the humbly unfortunate, but to those in high position whose ignorance of their trust makes them far more pitiable. These qualities of patience and tact Dr. Franklin had long admired in Dan's father; but it happened that his opportunities of seeing them in the son had not been many. He almost laughed out loud when he remembered how Dan had turned aside the Governor's suggestion of furnishing guards to live at Akbar.

"Might as well wear a leech over your heart to keep out the bullets," had been the doctor's thought when this munificent offer was graciously made. It was Dan who had finally lodged in the Governor's mind the idea that he would issue a proclamation for the future protection of his dear Inglesi. With a sigh, the doctor wondered how much good that proclamation with its lurid language could possibly do. Well, this was all they could hope from the Governor; and there were other perplexities to be settled.

Of these perhaps the most immediate was Mr. Frever. This gentleman had absolutely made up his mind that the shooting was a plain indication of Providence. It meant that the Rev. Henry Freyer was to do his winter's work, not at Samarvam, but on Mt. Akbar. One American, he declared, had no business to live alone on the mountain. If the relief work amounted to anything, Prescott would have to spend most of his time there. No one of the regular staff in Muramna could possibly be spared to keep him company: and Prescott himself ought not to be obliged, by continuing his work at the Treasury, to ride back and forth daily between Akbar and the city. If Mr. Frever gave up for this winter his work at Samarvam, it would leave Standish free, under the direction of Mr. Dan Lawrence, to fill in at the Treasury and the Press. But Mr. Freyer's greatest argument for staying was that he could accomplish more religious work at Akbar than at Samarvam. The men who were making water-pipes were gathered from all parts of the mountains and the plain. There probably never had been such an opportunity for spreading the Gospel. These men would stay on the mountain all winter. Sabbath after Sabbath, evening after evening, Mr. Frever could meet with them. In the spring they would go back to their own people, taking with them the Word of Life. Last Monday at Station meeting he had moved that they write to the Board for permission. The motion had been carried and the letter sent, before it was known that Thorley Prescott, who had not come down to the meeting, was vehemently opposed to Mr. Freyer's plan.

When Dr. Franklin thought over the remaining days of the week, he was ready to clutch at his thick grizzled hair. Tuesday his little Harriet had been taken ill. The trouble seemed to be nothing serious; but every night her temperature went up, and through the day she was languid and fretful, not at all like herself. Yedgar, over at Sawam, had almost died of ignorant nursing and had to be brought suddenly down to the Hospital at the risk of his life. There were extra Station meetings; there was another audience with the Governor; there were countless interviews with informers who claimed to have news about the man who shot Isaac, but would not for the world testify against him in a Moslem law-court.

"The worst of it is," thought the doctor, "that the whole Station is up on its ear and everybody seems to expect me to settle the mess. I'd just like to know what's going to happen, anyway!"

When Mrs. Franklin came into the room a few minutes later, she found her husband bolt upright in a rocking-chair that squeaked. This was a bad sign. Moreover, he was reading an ancient "Commentary on the Book of Job" and was scowling horribly, partly because he had forgotten to put on his glasses. The worst sign of all was that he paid no attention when she came and sat down in her low rocker with its old blue cushion. Being a superlatively wise woman, Mrs. Franklin went one step farther than to say nothing. She forced herself not to go and extract her husband's glasses from his pocket and put them on over that tremendous scowl. It was better to let him get his headache in such peace as he could extract from the Commentary on Job. She did just reach out and pick up the new copy of "Mr. Dooley," which had come that week by mail from America. She had meant to save this favorite philosopher of the doctor's to put in his Christmas stocking, but in the last week a greater need had arisen, so "Mr. Dooley" was sacrificed. Now he had lain for three days on the doctor's table, his leaves uncut, and his glazed paper wrapping still untouched; for the doctor loved to crackle this in his hand

because it was so new and then throw it away. (Needless to say, his wife always smoothed it out and used it; for American waxed paper is at a premium in Persia.)

No wonder Mrs. Franklin had left off asking questions and preventing headaches. She herself did not care so very much about perusing "Mr. Dooley." She liked to hear it burred out in the doctor's big voice, with shouts of laughter from him and the twins. She loved to listen for little Harriet's trill, which came in tardily after an outburst from the others. She liked to watch Mary Freyer's grave face as her literal mind grappled with the joke before last. But to sit down in cold blood and read "Mr. Dooley" by herself! Yet something must be done. Mrs. Franklin's head bent lower and lower over the green book, and her delicious laugh was heard every now and then gurgling in her throat.

"Mercy on us, Kate! Do hold your head up. What are you laughing about, anyway?"

"Oh, Harry, listen to this." Mrs. Franklin read out a carefully chosen passage with a brogue that was a blatant departure from the real thing.

"Here, give it to me. How can I understand it, when you read like a Normal School graduate?" The doctor stretched out his great hand; but Mrs. Franklin put the book behind her.

"What must you do, Harry, before I can allow you to read any book of mine?"

"Any book of yours, hey? I thought those 'Dooleys' belonged to me."

"This one is mine. See how new it is?" She let the cover stick out from behind her back, and twisting her neck around, began to skim the Table of Contents. The next moment she and the book were transported across the room, and the doctor, with his glasses on and his wife in his lap, was reading aloud from the new "Mr. Dooley."

"Not so very funny, is it?" he said, after the first paragraph; but in the middle of the next he began to chuckle. At the end of the page he laughed outright; and the second page was so plentifully besprinkled with Ha-has that the easy-chair creaked under him and Edward and Edith came in from their studying in the next room, clamoring for a share in the joke.

It was long past their usual bedtime when the twins were sent upstairs. They closed the door behind them so reluctantly that Edward could be heard saying to Edith, "Say, Ede, isn't Pa a bird?"

Edith's answer came quickly and clearly. "He's the dearest Father in the whole world, and as for Mother! Why, Ted, I believe Miss Stuart is right. She says children in America don't have fun with their parents as we do. There isn't time."

Edward's reply was partly lost in the distance, but Dr. Franklin caught the words, "Bully old Persia," and then something like "good enough for me."

"Harry," said Mrs. Franklin, laying her cheek against her husband's rough beard, "I think those children of ours are pretty nice."

"Kate," said the doctor suddenly, "the little tad must be better, or you wouldn't have left her all this time."

"Sleeping sweetly when I came down," answered Mrs. Franklin. "No temperature at all and a lovely color in her cheeks. Yulea was to call me if she stirred."

"Why didn't you tell me, before?" asked the doctor. "You know I was worried about her."

Mrs. Franklin took his head between her hands and rumpled up his hair until he looked like the Wild Man of Borneo. "Last time I found you reading the Book of Job, you wouldn't believe me when I told you I had found my pearl brooch that we thought was stolen by your assistant." Her laugh was low and indulgent as she began to smooth

his hair down again, with the soft little touches which he loved.

"Oh, Katie," he cried, "I let you bear all the burdens, your own and mine to boot. What if I should change from now on and be a better man?"

She nestled closer to whisper in his ear, "Don't, please. I believe I like you best of all just exactly as you are."

CHAPTER XX

WAY FOR THE BLACK SAIB

THE weeks that followed the shooting at Akbar were actually pleasant to one member of the Station only. All the others were more or less upset by the feeling that they had an enemy with an active revolver. The women especially found it hard to get back their tranquillity. The fear that weighed them down was all the more sickening because it was not for themselves. They had to stand by and see their husbands ride out as usual into the villages. Perhaps there was a little more fervor in their good-by kisses, but the lips that gave them tried hard not to quiver and the eyes that watched long from upstairs windows despised the curtain of tears: and no wife neglected through those anxious weeks to say with all her heart in some form the little prayer long since become a part of her daily life: "Lord, if it be Thy will, keep him safe until I see him again." Perhaps the women who were not wiveshad prayers of their own, not confided to human ears.

Concerning all this uneasiness, of which he was partly the cause, Thorley Prescott alone was heedless. To him these weeks were a time of exhilaration. He felt that the enmity of Husain was directed toward himself alone. This being so, he drank the wine of danger and rode to and from his work with his black head held high and his eyes looking straight ahead. It would have been a satisfaction, of course, if he could have kept his promise of punishing Husain with his own hands; but having done his best to catch the rascal redhanded, he was content now to wait another opportunity.

Besides, he was too busy these days to bother about it.

There were one or two bothers that had to be given place in his thoughts. One was the body-guard which his workmen insisted upon forming whenever their Black Saib took his rides abroad. They treated him like a general or a prince and would have called him by at least one of these titles, had he permitted it.

The words of the Black Saib were law to his men, except in this one matter of the body-guard. Six of them at least would go with him whenever he left the shelter of the Mission wall. Sent back to their work, they shuddered at the tone of command, and made as if to obey; but if the Black Saib deigned to turn his head, he would see behind him at a distance respectful but not too remote, his invariable bodyguard. It was an honor much sought after, to ride with the Saib. an honor that was apportioned by the workmen themselves on principles that were not revealed to the missionaries. Thorley did notice that none ran with him, except strong men and good fighters. He did try to inquire where they got the three horses whose condition improved so markedly from day to day; but the matter remained a mystery ornamented by a profusion of language and gesticulations. Thorley tried to disband the body-guard by threatening to dock their wages, though whatever work he laid out for them was always promptly finished. He hardened his heart and gave out that whoever left the premises in working hours except by his permission, should receive no wages for the entire day.

The next morning he started for the city, chuckling over his prospect of freedom. At the first ford the neigh of a horse made him turn around, and there, at the usual distance, he beheld his body-guard, three riding, as always, and three running. The Black Saib said things under his breath which it was lucky the Fiend could not repeat. He found these incidents hard to explain and talked the whole thing over that day with Dan Lawrence.

Perhaps it was through Dan that Jean Stuart came to hear of it. However it was, she made herself mistress of all the facts. Then she sent a note to Thorley, demanding that the body-guard be authorized, and that they be given full wages for all time they spent in riding and running with their chief. The note was peremptory and in the event final; but it gave occasion for discussions between Thorley and Jean, which were by no means few nor short nor perhaps concerned exclusively with body-guards, wages, and waterpipes.

It was in those three weeks, however, that Tean Stuart learned the ins and outs of the work at Akbar. She was the first to hear that the roofs of the new dwellings were in place. She learned to dread the rain or snow that would interfere with their being properly rolled. She heard the names of all the new workmen who were taken on when the dormitories were ready. The names of the first thirty-three were already familiar to her; and with most of the bodyguard detail she had a bowing acquaintance. It was she who rejoiced most intelligently when improved moulds of hard wood increased the output of water-pipes by at least one hundred per diem. It was she who clapped her hands when the Governor of Muramna gave his order in writing for three thousand water-pipes. This was a triumph, indeed, celebrated by the Khanum with the Head of the Rising Sun with many gleeful words and a radiance of face that was fairly dazzling to the one spectator.

Thorley Prescott basked in the sunshine of Jean's sympathy. Every glance from the golden depths of her gray eyes gave him greater confidence in his own powers. Every sparkle of light in the ruddy crinkles of her hair gave him one more glimpse into the joy of his new work. There were moments when his bitterness all melted away and the future gleamed before him full of ruddiness and sunshine. At such a moment it would have been a hazard to remind

the Thunderer of what he used to say about women with red hair. Even the difficulty with Mr. Freyer grew to seem a thing of no importance. If the little man wanted to spend the winter puttering around on the mountain, why not let him? After all, it would be a saving of labor for the Black Saib. Prescott knew that if he were left alone with his workmen, he would have to think out ways of teaching them to become so different that the difference would go back with them in the end to their old homes. The part that surprised him was to find that there were already many ways which he would like to explain to them, if he could do so without danger of being overheard by any one who called himself an orthodox missionary. Unconsciously he had been looking forward through his first weeks at Akbar to the time when he would be alone with his men. When, therefore, Mr. Freyer announced his intention of staying all winter, it was in a rage of disappointment that Thorley declared the plan needless and wasteful of working force. The good little man with his quivering beard and middle-aged fussiness, irritated the nerves of his "young brother." Mr. Frever never could learn anything about the industry which was the reason for forming a colony at Akbar. The business purpose in itself was to him anathema. It was fitting. he owned, that the men should spend a part of each day in laboring with their hands. Otherwise it might not be for their good to give them money; but water-pipes, reservoirs. and even roofs over their heads were of no importance whatever as compared with the opportunities given them of hearing the Gospel from the lips of the Rev. Henry Freyer. It was hard to keep him from talking with the men, even while they were at work. It was impossible to explain any theory which made faithful labor an article of religion and strove to correct the life of a lazy man who had wallowed in dirt and ignorance, by making him first of all industrious and clean. Mr. Freyer and Thorley Prescott approached the

subject from opposite ends of parallel lines. Even Dan Lawrence shook his head and dared not hope that the double solitude of a winter together would bring them to a common point. He wished he had been at the meeting which authorized Mr. Freyer's letter to the Board. When he said so to Dr. Franklin, that much harassed gentleman very nearly lost his temper. He stood and breathed hard through his mouth like an engine letting off steam. This was a peculiar habit which the doctor had cultivated since leaving Milwaukee.

"Drat it!" he said at last, drooping his big shoulders and spreading his hands helplessly, "what are we going to do?" They were in Dan's study, and a knock at the door interrupted the answer that Dan did not know how to give.

"It's the telephone, Papa," said Danny. "I think some one wants Dr. Franklin."

The doctor took himself downstairs, dragging his feet and grumbling a little into his beard. Three minutes later he shouted from the foot of the stairs: "Dan, Mr. Freyer's got a severe attack of rheumatism. He's laid up at our house. I guess that'll fix us, won't it?"

Ruth Lawrence, very much shocked, confided to her mother that it sounded as if Uncle Harry was pleased to hear that Mr. Freyer was sick.

The fact is that Dr. Franklin was pleased and did not hesitate to say so within bounds. Mr. Freyer's attack was severe enough to settle the question of his going to Samarvam. He would have to stay in Muramna that winter. Moreover, it was easy to decree that the life at Akbar was too exposed for him. He had brought on this very attack while sleeping one night on the ground floor when the new houses were in building. Dr. Franklin put down his huge foot and declared that the place for Henry Freyer that winter was unquestionably in the Franklin household. And oh, how happy was Mary Freyer! She made milk toast

and simmered broth and garnished trays to her heart's content. All her hours now were shining, except the ones she spent in school or, much to her disgust, outdoors. Mr. Freyer, who thought her a perfect nurse, made haste to reward her by getting well. He resigned himself to the doctor's decree, looking forward submissively to a winter of Treasury and Press work.

"Funny," said Dr. Franklin to his wife, late on Christmas Eve, while they sat looking at the row of stockings hung up around the stove, "funny, isn't it, how the Lord lets us fuss and fume, trying to figure out the answer to a problem, and all the time He has it ready to give, and it all comes out just as even!"

"Do you call Mr. Freyer's rheumatic fever an answer from the Lord?" asked Mrs. Franklin.

"Well, what do you call it? Hasn't it just settled everything without a remainder or a flaw?"

Mrs. Franklin, resting her tired head against the back of her chair, only smiled.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TREE

JEAN STUART was amazed to find herself completely under the spell of a really Merry Christmas. It began at the Lawrences' with the Christmas Eve supper where Danny appeared, his eyes dancing and his lips held together with both hands, "for fear," Ruth gravely explained, "that the secrets should burst out of him before the tree is ready."

It had already been conveyed to Jean that day by many signs and mysteries that a Tree was being trimmed and loaded in Dan's study upstairs. Knowing that evergreens did not grow in Persia, Jean wondered how the Lawrences could get a Christmas Tree; but, though she managed to smuggle a pile of gay parcels into the sacred room, she asked no questions, and even refused Danny's invitation to "Take a peek with us children, since you don't seem to be helping the 'grown-ups.'"

After supper there was an unusual kind of family prayers. The children recited Christmas hymns, the grown-ups said verses around; they all sang "While Shepherds Watched," the servants joining, with friendly but inharmonious results by means of the Syriac version. Then Grandpa "prayed short." "But I think," Danny whispered to Miss Stuart, "that Mamma ast him to."

This confidence took place when prayers were over and the gentlemen had vanished up the stairs "to light the Tree," as Danny further explained, with his ear to the crack of the door. "Now, Ruth," he added severely, "you better keep puffeckly still, or we can't hear the music when it sounds."

"Music!" cried Jean, "what kind of music?"

"Oh, any kind," said Danny carelessly, "if there isn't a mouth-organ or a horn, there's uzhally a bell, at least. You just wait."

So Jean just waited, and presently she did hear an extraordinary mixture of sounds coming down from above.

"Come, Ruth," cried Danny, "take hold of my hand, quick. Is the percession ready, Mamma? Do make the servants hurry."

"You may start, dear," said Mrs. Lawrence, offering her arm to Jean, and leading her to a place behind the children. "We let the youngest go first on this occasion," she explained as they went upstairs, followed by a group of servants giggling with delight and curiosity.

Jean could not help pausing for an instant in the sacred doorway as she took in the fact that the object around which the children were already dancing was not more than three feet high, made of metal, and sparsely bedight with artificial green needles. Yet the Tree, set on a high pedestal and blazing with candles and tinsel, flaunted its sparse green needles on its geometrical green branches as proudly as if it knew itself to be the realest Christmas Tree that had ever been set up in Persia.

"Wait until you have hung your presents for thirty years on the bare branches of a cherry tree," said Dan Lawrence in Miss Stuart's ear, "then you will appreciate the splendor of this makeshift."

"I really think," declared Margaret, joining them, "that there's nothing important missing except the smell. Last year I burned my old pine pillow in the stove and that was lovely, but—"

Jean Stuart vanished from the room and came back instantly with the pine pillow which had been her most faithful travelling companion.

"Have you a knife, Mr. Lawrence?" she cried. "I

couldn't wait to hunt for scissors. There now!" as she flung a generous handful of needles into the stove, "who says this isn't the genuine Christmas smell, warranted to cause and cure homesickness before you have time to wipe your eyes?"

"You'll have to keep on wiping them, if you leave that stove door open," said Dan.

But Jean and Margaret continued to dole out the needles sparingly while the old stove, which had been raised in the State of Maine, showed its gratitude by smoking very little.

"Papa," whispered Danny, plucking his parent by the sleeve, "aren't we ever going to have the presents? I sh'd think you grown-ups could do your smelling afterwards."

Dan laughed and looked at his wife, jerking his head questioningly toward the presents heaped up under the Tree.

"Yes, yes, by all means," answered Margaret; and Dan, going over to the Tree, began to read the labels.

The rule was that when a person's name was called, he rushed up to get his present, said a vague but hearty "Thank you," and retired to open his package, after which he indulged in fervent ejaculations and made for himself the path of a whirlwind until he had seized and kissed the giver of the gift. When several whirlwinds were let loose at once in the little room, the result was all that could be desired in the way of a thrill.

Never were there such presents!

Dan Lawrence cried, "Just what I wanted!" as he slipped his arms into the dressing-gown made by his wife from a pianocover brought out in the eighteen sixties by her mother-in-law. Dan was echoed by Grandpa Lawrence, who took off his glasses to wipe them on the cleaner Ruth had made from the tops of her mother's wedding-gloves. Miss Stuart hugged Danny nearly in two when she found that he had given her the Persian box which she had often admired on

his bureau; and he returned the hug with interest after he came upon a pair of rubber boots, abundantly large for his feet, it is true, but suited exactly to his ambitions as a pirate, and to his needs as a small boy shuffling in mud puddles.

Jean's treasures grew too bulky at last to be easily carried around. So she sat down near the gangway door to gloat over them as she spread them in her lap: Danny's box, Ruth's needle-case, the beautiful old saddle-bag to hold her books and lunch when she rode to the College. This was from Dr. Lawrence, who had used it for many years in his village work. The Franklin twins had sent her home-made candy in a gorgeous box, and little Harriet had tied together two pieces of blotting-paper and lettered on the outside in crooked capitals, — I LUV U. Dr. MacColl had given her an old book with an inscription in it — "From Jonathan Stuart to his faithful friend Dugald MacColl"; Margaret Lawrence had sacrificed her last copy of a picture of the children which Jean particularly liked; and Dan himself had made a frame for it from an old piece of pearl inlay.

Altogether no lapful of gifts had ever caused Jean Stuart to feel so rich, though, taken all together, excepting the doctor's book, they could not compare in money value with one box of American Beauty roses. And Miss Stuart of New York had been known to receive more than one such box at Christmas. With the thought of roses, it occurred to her how queer it would be to pass a holiday season free from the tribute of male admirers. At which psychological moment she heard on the gangway leading to the Prescott's house, a decided and hasty step. The next instant there came a thundering knock at the outer door. Danny, who was prancing about in his new boots, made haste to open the door, and was confronted by no less a personage than Santa Claus with white beard and apple-red cheeks, coat and cap of dark sheepskin powdered with snow, and arms full of bundles.

Danny fell back in amazement, the servants crowded toward the hall-door, Ruth took refuge behind her mother, who looked helplessly at Dan, who, in turn, stared at the stranger. Santa Claus, meanwhile, peered around the room until his eyes rested on Miss Stuart, who sat a little behind him against the wall. Then he smiled; after which his identity was no longer a question with Jean Stuart.

Santa Claus advanced a step and, after clearing his throat, said, in a high nasal voice, "Merry Christmas, good people. I have brought you a few small gifts."

"Why did he clear his throat?" thought Jean. "They must recognize him now, though he does the voice part well enough."

But apparently he was not recognized; for the Lawrences continued to stand speechless, and for the most part openmouthed, while Santa, with remarks more or less appropriate, distributed a gift to each person. The servants, meanwhile, had huddled out into the hall, and could be heard falling over each other down the stairs. Dan went out to quiet them, assuring them that the stranger was a friend from Mr. Prescott's, and if they came back they would soon see that he was not to be feared. Santa's gift to him of a silver-mounted riding-whip with the second half of the inscription more roughly engraved than the first, had revealed to Dan who their benefactor was. The servants were further reassured by the gift of a large parcel of sweetmeats. Then Santa, turning to Miss Stuart, and going down on one knee, laid at her feet a small parcel. Jean smiled at him.

"I'm sorry I can't pick it up. You see how full my lap is. Besides, you must make me a speech, too."

Santa humbly picked up the parcel and laid it in her hand. "You'll find the speech written," he said in his natural voice. Then, turning around, he snatched off his cap, making a low bow, which showed off a head of coal-black hair.

"I hoped if I came as Santa Claus," he said, "that you might let me stay awhile."

The children flung themselves on him, tore off his beard, and tried to rub the color from his cheeks.

Meanwhile, Jean read her speech. "For an intellectual woman whom I find it impossible to hate."

When she opened the parcel she came on a seal exactly like the one of the Thanksgiving dinner-table. But she knew very well that Roger Standish had not sent it to her.

"Why!" said Dan Lawrence, when the hubbub had subsided a little, "here's one more present which I overlooked. It's addressed to Miss Jean Stuart, but it doesn't say from where."

Because Dan knew the precise handwriting, he smiled a little as he gave the parcel to Santa, who stood between him and Miss Stuart. Santa also knew the handwriting; but he scowled as he delivered the parcel.

Miss Stuart unwrapped a beautiful filagree brass vase which she held up for admiration before she read the card that was tied around its neck. Then she saw how Santa was scowling. The card read, "Compliments and heartfelt best wishes from Henry Freyer." After reading it, she looked again at Santa and then she blushed.

Meanwhile, Dan had been called away by a commotion downstairs. He came back presently with a paper which he handed to Miss Stuart.

"Since you came," he said, "we are growing so important that they get out a Governor's guard to send us cable messages in the evening."

"Read it for me, please," she said, handing it back. "It's in Turkish."

"No, it isn't," said Dan. "It's English, but it's written queerly."

"Well, what is it?" said Jean. "I can't read it."

"You help me, Thor," said Dan. The two men puzzled

over it for some moments, then Thorley turned impatiently awav.

"I can't read the thing, and I don't want to," he said, with one fierce glare at Jean before he crossed the room.

"I have it now," cried Dan, "but I hope you won't like it any better than we do. It's dated Calcutta, India, December 23. 'Have just heard your dilemma. Am starting for Bushire and will escort you home by southern route. 'Robert Courtlandt.'"

"Good night, Mrs. Lawrence," said Santa Claus. "I beg your pardon for my intrusion."

When the door had slammed behind a Saint whose farewells were more curt than sanctified, Jean Stuart turned to Dan.

"I wonder how it will be possible to make Mr. Courtlandt understand by cable the inviolability of my contract to stay here until spring. I doubt if he has ever signed a contract in his life."

"Then you won't go!" cried Margaret.

Jean stooped to put her arms around Ruth. "Go!" "I wouldn't go now, if you offered me another vear's salary!"

CHAPTER XXII

AND STRIFE THEREWITH

CHRISTMAS DAY was by no means a complete vacation for the missionaries. At nine o'clock, there was in the city church a service conducted by Dr. Lawrence. At the same time Dan was preaching to the girls at Faith Seminary, the children of the neighborhood being gathered in to fill up the extra room. George Whiting and Mr. John Prescott held early prayer-meetings for their respective students and then marshalled them into the city to hear Dr. Lawrence. As for Thorley Prescott, he rose long before daylight and, escaping his body-guard, who were spending the night in the guest-house, made his way back to the mountain. There he closeted himself with such of his men as had not gone away to their families. What he said to the men was not known even by Roger Standish, who had been sent up for a few days to help him. Prescott had curtly asked his new assistant to stay away from the meeting; and the boy had time to get awfully homesick before it was over and the horses were brought around. As they went to the College, it was all he could do to keep within sight of Thorley Prescott, who rode the Fiend at a pace even more furious than usual. The fact was that Thorley was cursing himself all the way because he had promised his father to be present at Christmas dinner.

Though they rode very fast, they did not arrive in time for the short English service with which the missionaries regaled themselves on holidays especially connected with

Home. By the time the two men had changed their clothes at the Seminary and had thrown a few snowballs at Edward's snow-man, the procession of the devout filed out of Dr. Franklin's house. Roger hailed it with shouts of "Merry Christmas" and challenged all who were men enough to join in a snowball fight. Thorley quickly backed up the challenge with one or two missiles that broke on the ground near enough to frighten some of the ladies. Edward, Sam, and Danny immediately hurled themselves and their best clothes into the fray, while their mothers besought their fathers to make them wait until after dinner when suitable garments might be found for them. Mrs. Whiting added in her most querulous tones that if they once got to fighting, they would never leave off, and dinner would be spoiled. The fight had already reached a point where it could not be stopped by mere words; so the three husbands bestirred themselves not too unwillingly, and each capturing a son, deposited him on the steps of the Whiting house with orders to "stay there now and not get your feet any wetter." This sortie having taken place under a galling fire of snowballs, the three fathers now looked at each other and, each turning up his collar and pulling down his hat, rushed with one accord upon the enemy, nor did they rest until with every face freshly washed and every hair where it ought not to have been, they returned in high good humor to hunt for clean collars. It would not do to swear that in the meantime the boys had refrained from gathering up what snow could be reached from the steps. Sammy Whiting may even have ventured out upon the lawn, and the other two. though without doubt they stayed where they were told, may not have disdained to take away what they could of Sam's illicitly gotten ammunition.

The champions were much too hungry to keep the dinner waiting long. Before Mrs. Whiting had time to get uneasy, she found it possible to seat her guests in order around

the festive board. As Mrs. Prescott had helped her in the arrangement of the table, some of the guests found themselves where they would rather not have been. Miss Trench, for instance, sat next to Mr. Freyer, who never had anything to say to her since she had refused to marry him six months before. Thorley Prescott, whose dejection had returned as soon as the fight was fairly over, sat between Miss Oddfellow and Miss Lea, with his stepmother where she could keep an eye on him across the table, and Miss Stuart so far away on the same side that he could not even catch a glimpse of her profile or an echo of her voice. Miss Stuart, however, fared better than her hostess intended. She had been carefully segregated from all the unmarried men; but, as she had been placed between the two doctors, both of whom she liked immensely, it did not occur to her to be discontented. She found it easy enough to evade Mr. Freyer's efforts at gaining her attention by craning his rheumatic neck around the enormous mound of fruit in the middle of the table. It was the first time since his illness that Mr. Freyer had left the Franklin's house, and the dinner had been appointed at the College so that he might safely be present. It was evident very soon to Miss Trench and Margaret Lawrence that he intended not to waste any opportunities the holiday might offer. But Miss Stuart continued blandly oblivious of him, until she happened to surprise Mrs. Whiting and Mrs. Prescott both looking at her and then exchanging a glance of congratulation. Jean instantly pricked her faculties to discover a reason for this.

"What can I be doing," she murmured to Dr. MacColl, "that actually gratifies the Medusa? Help me to find out what it is, and I'll stop at once."

"Nonsense," said the doctor, shortly.

"I know it sounds that way," said Jean, with a meekness of tone, which her face belied; "she never has been pleased

with me before, not for one single moment. I'm going to ask her."

She leaned forward with eyes and lips brimful of mischief. Dr. MacColl laid a peremptory hand on her arm; and Miss Stuart, checked also by the fact that Mrs. Prescott was now talking to her host, found herself face to face with Mr. Frever, and obliged to answer a stream of questions from him. Promptly enough this brought back to her the attention of Mrs. Prescott. Thorley also took advantage of her leaning forward to get a good look at her. And Roger Standish broke off his sober talk with Miss Lea to laugh at the mild jest with which Miss Stuart answered an elaborate compliment from Mr. Freyer. One Jovian from over the crooked glasses of the Medusa swept her and the three men with a petrifying glare and explained everything. Tean neatly turned over to Mrs. Lawrence the answering of Mr. Freyer's last question and leaned back in her chair with a silent chuckle.

"Dear me, dear me," she murmured gleefully; "is that all I have to do! I had no idea she would take notice of anything so far removed from her sphere. I think I must manage to inch a little nearer."

At this moment Mr. Freyer's face peered at her again from around the fruit. "Oh, Mr. Freyer," she cried in a voice pitched for Mrs. Prescott's ear, "don't let me forget that there is something I must say to you after dinner."

"Is it something that can't be told now?" said Mr. Freyer with a fatuous smile.

"I am sure," broke in Mrs. Prescott, "that anything of real interest to Mr. Freyer will be of interest to us all."

"Oh, it's nothing to tell," said Jean, "just something to say, and I couldn't think of causing Mr. Freyer to sit in that strained position any longer after all that he has suffered. Au revoir."

She came very near kissing her hand to the obedient little

gentleman as his beaming countenance disappeared behind the fruit; but she turned the gesture just in time to a graceful wave of the hand.

"Here, here," said Dr. Franklin. "I can't let you have any secrets with my patients. Don't you know that nothing is so bad for the health as a craving for the unattainable?"

"On the other hand is anything a better tonic than anticipation?"

"The question is, though," said the doctor, rather gravely, "what comes after he's taken the trouble to anticipate?"

"My prettiest 'Thank you,'" said Jean. "He sent me a beautiful Christmas present."

"Ah, so! I wondered where you got that seal."

Jean was wearing the Sassanian seal on a platinum and pearl chain which she had passed through the hole in the wedge-shaped upper end of the stone. She dangled it toward the doctor as he finished speaking.

"Don't you remember this?" she said. "Mr. Freyer didn't give it to me."

"Ha, ha," the doctor burst out after a short scrutiny, "to the victor belong the spoils. Good for you, Standish. We all owe you a vote of thanks."

"What for?" asked Roger, returning not too unwillingly from a discussion of Pragmatism, in which he was floundering beyond his depth.

"Why, for giving this seal to the person who deserves it. I wish I could have given it to her myself."

Miss Lea smiled patiently as Standish craned his neck to look at the seal. "But I didn't give it to her," he cried. "I traded it off to Prescott for a perfectly dandy horse," and he turned back hastily to see what Amy thought of his being accused of giving things to other girls when she had refused so far to let him give her anything more than a book.

"Young man, you shall pay for that," thought Jean Stuart; but she gave herself up for the rest of the meal to an educational discussion that would have made a high place for her in an American Woman's Club.

Time would fail us to tell of all Jean Stuart did after dinner, how she brought Mr. Freyer to the gates of Heaven and kept him from going any farther. How she detached Roger Standish from his pragmatic discussion and established him in frivolous contentment at her other side. How she led the applause for the children's pieces and incited the grown people to bring out long-forgotten stunts. How she intoxicated more than one sober-minded person to the point where he was proud to let himself be as funny as he had been in his college days. How she let Thorley Prescott sit glowering over against her until she thought he had glowered enough, when she sent Edward Franklin to tell him she would like to speak to him. How he intended to say he would not come, but caught her eye and came as fast as he could. How she scolded him for going away the previous evening before she had thanked him for his gift. How Thorley's answer was very little more than a growl. How Jean had the face to ask him what made him so cross on Christmas Day, and he had the face to say that he could not be jolly, because she was going away, and she asked him very saucily how he knew that when she didn't, and he answered that he supposed she would jump at the chance of being rescued by that Courtlandt fellow. Then Jean laughed in his face and said he didn't deserve to be told anything, but that if he would urge Mr. Standish to sing, he might go and ask Dan Lawrence what she had said over the cable about the inviolability of a contract. "And very expensive it is, I can tell you, to explain one's principles by cable." The result was that Thorley did urge Standish to sing, that he in fact escorted him forcibly to the piano, and returning, captured Roger's seat by Miss Stuart,

whose side he never left for a moment all the rest of the evening.

Finally Miss Stuart's pupils came in a body to ask for a song from her. "Sing to the grown people," they begged, "as you do for us. We know they would like it."

"I know it, too," pleaded Mrs. Franklin; "you see I often listen outside the door."

Then all the little hands laid hold of Jean and pulled her to the piano; and she went laughing and sang a song or two that the children loved. And then Thorley, who was not far off, asked if she knew Schubert's "Widmung," and she said Yes, but it was impossible to play that accompaniment and sing into the wall.

"Stand up and sing it, then," he answered, and she stood up and sang it, and he played for her; and while the others held their breath at her singing, she marvelled no less at Thorley's playing.

After Jean Stuart had sung "Widmung" she found herself in a different mood. When Roger Standish would have fallen at her feet, she sent him straight back to Miss Lea. She talked very sweetly to Mr. Freyer about Mary's talent for music, saying that she would like to take the child back to America and give her a thorough musical education. When Mr. Freyer hinted that there were those who thought the gifts of Miss Stuart more needed in Persia than in America, she laughingly but decidedly told him that nothing would induce her to stay in Persia longer than was required by her contract to teach. She turned him over then to the tender mercies of Mrs. Prescott, who was ready enough to keep him plied with questions and advice.

Jean then joined a game of crokinole to which she was invited by Edward, and she played so very badly under the fixed regard of Thorley Prescott that she was glad when Dr. MacColl came and said it was time for rounds at the Hospital; did Jean care to go now, or would she follow later?

The game having just ended, Jean said she would go. The children protested and Thorley offered his escort later, if she would stay; but Jean was firm.

"Then let me go with you now," begged Thorley, and the doctor, very much amazed, said they would be delighted to have him.

The three walked in silence across the Compound until they reached the doctor's door. Then Thorley said "Goodnight," and the doctor said, "Won't you come in?" And Thorley, knowing that when the doctor had gone on her rounds, he would be alone with Jean, refused.

Miss Stuart held out her hand to him as she stood on the step above him; and after a perceptible pause, he took it. "We must sing together often," she said; "you play for me gloriously."

"Never again," he answered fervently. "Good-by."

CHAPTER XXIII

MISS ODDFELLOW'S INSPIRATION

It was on Christmas evening that Miss Oddfellow conceived the idea of pressing Jean Stuart into service. Miss Oddfellow's vocation was Faith Seminary, where she had the entire responsibility of one hundred girls and five native teachers, to say nothing of a young American colleague whose impulses led her as often as not into mischief.

One might think that Miss Oddfellow would have had little or no time for diversion. Yet the dear lady had a pet recreation in which she managed to indulge herself once or twice a week at least. This indulgence was the visiting of Moslem women in their homes; and Miss Oddfellow carried her love for it to such an extreme that her colleagues declared she would rather go calling than read her letters from home! The gratification of this taste was not always convenient for the female friends of Miss Oddfellow; as it meant that one of them had to mount guard at the Seminary in her absence and that another had to go with her. is not possible for a housekeeper to leave her home and children to the mercy of native servants. Yet Miss Oddfellow very much preferred that her companion be a married lady, because a pair of spinsters, though welcomed for once as a curiosity by their Persian hostesses, did not command the honor which Miss Oddfellow thought essential to the progress of her plans. Evidently it was no selfish dream of social prestige that drove her forth on these expeditions; for, in whatever household she appeared with

168

married ladies, she was never given any seat but the lowest, and the women would at first listen to any of the others rather than to her. There had been times when Miss Oddfellow, communing with her own heart, had wished that it were possible to be a married lady without the embarrassment of maintaining a husband.

But these regrets had once for all been cast aside, when she discovered that even an old maid could master the art of rousing and strengthening a new interest in the mind of a Moslem woman. Childishness, *ennui*, curiosity, discontent, and suffering, all these were strings on which Miss Oddfellow, after years of practice, had learned to play. And now she strove to produce, not the discord of an ignorant striving for an unattainable freedom, but the simple melody that comes when a human heart is tuned to love and forgiveness and the joy of helping others.

Miss Oddfellow had acquired such insight into the minds of her Moslem friends that she knew at once whether anything she saw or heard would please them. She had been wondering ever since Jean Stuart's arrival how she could turn to account that young person's evident attractions, but until she heard Jean sing she had been a little afraid that the Khanum of the Rising Sun might cause the attention of almost any anderson to wander from the ideas it was most desirable to introduce. And yet it worried Miss Oddfellow greatly that she could not immediately extract for her Moslem women a spiritual value from Jean Stuart's presence in Muramna. It made her feel that she must be growing old, and she lay awake more than once to wonder how soon it would be due to the Board that she should resign and go Home. Perhaps a tear or two sank into her pillow as she reflected that Home now stood for nothing more intimate than the Missionaries' Rest Room at the Board Rooms and the half-open door of her only relative. a grandniece. It would have been pleasant, she thought.

if she could have saved up one or two hundred dollars to assure her reception into an Old Ladies' Home; but she had never been one to save, and two hundred dollars was not a sum which one could expect to have fall from the skies.

"After all, it may be that the Lord will be so gracious as to let me die in the harness. At any rate, I must not shame His tender mercy by anxious thought for the morrow."

An arrow of trust sent upward through the dark, brought down a wonderful plan for the telling of a certain story in words that would bring it home to the heart of no less a person than the Governor's favorite wife.

"And if I can have such ideas," was the afterthought, "perhaps I am still fit for a few years of service."

Then she chid herself that there should be any thought of her own advantage mingled with holier desires, and she put herself to sleep at last by murmuring the dear old hymn that ends:—

"Teach us in every state
To make Thy will our own;
And when the joys of sense depart,
To live by faith alone."

And the very next day she heard Jean Stuart sing. Now when the singing began, it was Miss Oddfellow's impulse to rush headlong upon the Khanum of the Rising Sun and demand her aid for an anderoon expedition the next day. But in her impulsive nature, the wisdom of the serpent had long since been added to her other virtues and stood her in very good stead, except on occasions when she had no time to think or when she deliberately put the maintenance of principle before the attainment of her immediate ends.

Therefore, by the time the singing ended, she thought it better to approach Mrs. Lawrence, and her she begged most earnestly to intercede with Miss Stuart.

"But Miss Oddfellow, she doesn't know Turkish," cried Margaret, "and I'm not perfectly sure that she would care to put herself in the position of singing Christian hymns when she professes not to have any religion."

"And very unsuitable it would be, I am sure," said Mrs.

Prescott, "to ask her to do such a thing."

"I did not seek your opinion, Melissa," said Miss Odd-fellow gently, "and my mind is quite made up. We get the women themselves to help us before they know what they are doing. They repeat Bible verses of which they have not the slightest comprehension. I mean to get Miss Stuart to sing the English words of some good hymn, and I will interpret them."

"I doubt if she will have the decency to consent," said Mrs. Prescott. "At all events, your course does not meet with my approval; and I refuse to countenance you in any way."

"It will not be the first time I have worked without your countenance, Melissa," Miss Oddfellow's voice was still gentle; her glance was still kindly as she turned decidedly away.

The next person approached was Miss Trench. That lady approved the plan, if it could be carried out, but did not consider herself the one to broach it.

"Get Dr. MacColl to ask her, if you won't do it yourself," she suggested. "The doctor will put it in such a way that Miss Stuart will see in it an opportunity to go sight-seeing. I am told that she is always eager for adventure."

"Indeed, I will not have her invited in any such manner," declared Miss Oddfellow. "On the whole, I believe it is best that I do it myself, and I will make haste to address her now before my courage gives out."

Upon which she looked around for Miss Stuart, who was discovered just going away with Dr. MacColl and Thorley Prescott. At the same time Dan Lawrence came to tell

her that if she wished to return that evening to the Seminary, they must start at once, so, very reluctantly, she went in search of her circular and her rubber overshoes.

The next morning she woke with an eagerness that took her to the Lawrences' before they had finished breakfast. She had forgotten that Miss Stuart would still be out at the College. Seeing her crestfallen look, Margaret suggested calling Jean to the telephone (for a private wire, the only one at that time in Persia, ran between the Lawrences' house and the Franklins'). Miss Oddfellow's consternation at this proposal was so extreme that Dan Lawrence came to her rescue by offering to take her message straight to Miss Stuart. He was going to the villages for a day's visiting and could stop at the College just as well as not. So Miss Oddfellow went into minute explanations, and they all agreed with her that it would have been very difficult to say all she wanted over the telephone. Dan was to say it for her as well as he could; and Tean was either to telephone her denial to Mrs. Lawrence, or to ride back to the city herself in token of her assent. For Miss Oddfellow longed, if possible, to make her first calls with the Khanum of the Rising Sun that very afternoon.

On his way to the College, Dan Lawrence smiled more than once under his long mustache. His mission to Jean Stuart aroused his humor as well as his hope, and he intended to make a success of it if he could. He had taken along Jean's hostler in order that she might have an escort to the city, and this he told her when he had set forth very briefly Miss Oddfellow's request.

"Do you mean that you banked on my doing as she asks?" Jean's eyes twinkled as she put the question.

His own eyes twinkled in reply, "Some one told me the other day," he said, "that she wished Miss Oddfellow was her great-grandaunt so that she could make her a real lace cap with pink ribbons, and feel whether her cheek is as soft

as it looks. When I want anything from you myself," he added, "I shall ask my Father to speak for it — or Danny."

Jean's laughter rippled merrily out. "Tell Tomas to see that Lord Chesterton is saddled. I'll be ready in fifteen minutes."

Dan Lawrence beamed at her as he turned to go. "I won't presume to thank you," he said.

"No?" answered Jean. "I'd like to see you ask or thank me more eloquently, if the favor were for yourself."

CHAPTER XXIV

MAKING MELODY

It was barely two o'clock when Miss Oddfellow, Miss Stuart, and Mrs. Lawrence, with two men-servants, set out on foot from the gate of the Compound. All the ladies wore thick veils and loose cloaks, as well as rubbers which they could take off at the door of the *anderoon* so that they might not seem to enter the house in their out-door shoes.

Jean Stuart had been persuaded to unearth a white gown from the bottom of a trunk. "Because, my dear," Miss Oddfellow had said, "the Persians are not interested in black. And couldn't you wear a bow or two of some bright color? I don't want to ask too much; but these little things make such a difference to ladies who seldom see anything of the outer world."

"But you know, Miss Oddfellow," said Margaret Lawrence, hastily, "Miss Stuart is not wearing colors, and —"

"I know, I know," said Miss Oddfellow kindly, "but these Mohammedan ladies do not know Miss Stuart; her wearing a color would convey no disrespect to the memory of her dear one; and if she could bring herself to put on some bright thing such as she was accustomed to deck herself with for the eyes of —"

Jean Stuart abruptly left the room; and Margaret Lawrence gazed in consternation at Miss Oddfellow. But that lady devoted herself to narrowing the sock she was knitting as if it were the most natural thing to be interrupted in the middle of a sentence.

When Jean Stuart came back presently, dressed all in

white, she wore a necklace of gold, curiously wrought; and depending from it were many jewels of colors that glowed and sparkled in the light.

"Oh, my dear," cried Miss Oddfellow, jumping to her feet and holding up both hands while her ball of yarn rolled briskly across the floor.

"Why, my dear," she cried, "I never saw anything so splendid — It's as beautiful as — as — as beautiful almost as you are!"

Jean Stuart laughed very softly as she went toward the little old lady. Her eyes were unusually bright, and she held something in each of her hands.

"Now," she said, "I've done something to please you; and I shall expect an immediate reward. Please try on this cap and this bonnet which I made to give you at Christmas, and then I hadn't the courage!"

Miss Oddfellow's soft cheek flushed a deeper pink, and her fingers trembled as she took off the bonnet that had outlived the memory of an entire missionary generation. Under it was the cap of black thread lace which she had inherited from her mother.

"Here, let me help," cried Jean, removing the cap with deft fingers and putting in its place the daintiest little concoction of real rosepoint, trimmed with one or two knots of pale pink ribbon. As if by accident, she fluffed out the thin grey hair underneath the cap and then crowned the whole with a black velvet bonnet made from one of her own hats.

"Hoya brukhta," cried Margaret Lawrence, clapping her hands. "Why didn't you show them to me?" she demanded. "I would have screwed your courage to the sticking-point long before this!"

"But, my dear," fluttered Miss Oddfellow, "they are very handsome, and I thank you heartily." She stood on

¹ May it be blessed.

tiptoe to salute Jean's cheek. "But really—really—*
She turned back for another look into the mirror—"what
will become of me and my old circular underneath all this?"

"You will be just where you ought to be," cried Jean, "and as for your circular—" she darted out of the room again, returning almost instantly with a handsome silk cloak that reached her own knees. This she threw around Miss Oddfellow, who was so tiny that the cloak reached her ankles. Yet it fitted her very well around the shoulders and the neck.

"Now you look like a Duchess," cried Miss Stuart. "You will wear them, won't you?"

"Oh, my dear," wailed Miss Oddfellow with the utmost consternation, "I couldn't wear these to the Khanum's. Why, I shouldn't know what I was saying. If I could have seen them for a week or two before I put them on, they might have — But no, my dear, I cannot think that anything so handsome is suitable for me." Miss Oddfellow smoothed the silk respectfully as she laid the cloak on a chair, having noticed with awe that its lining was brocaded satin, faintly tinged with rose.

"If she does insist on my accepting it," thought this incorrigible giver, "that lining will make a handsome basque for one of the younger ladies."

She took off the velvet bonnet then and hung it carefully on a chair; but the little white cap she could not bring herself to relinquish; and when she found that the old bonnet would crush the new cap she consented to be recrowned.

"After all, though very rich, it is not at all ostentatious," she announced, "and since it is on my head where I cannot see it, I shall not need to think of it while I am talking. Besides Fatima Khanum told me only the last time I visited her that she wished I would sometimes appear in more novel garments, and she is to be present to-day at Shukepha Khanum's home." So saying, with a final glance toward

the mirror, the good lady donned her circular and overshoes and led the way to the door.

Arrived at the house of Hassan Mirza Khan the three ladies knocked at the outer door of the anderoon, which was presently opened by a eunuch. Having received word in the morning that the foreigners would visit them, the Persian ladies had ordered them to be admitted at once to the largest room in the anderoon, where the wives of the prince, their grown daughters, their favorite slaves, and one or two of their neighbors were gathered in state to receive the Inglesi. The Americans waited only to remove their rubbers before they followed the eunuch through the intricate passage that led to the heart of the anderoon.

Jean Stuart, entering the receiving-room behind Miss Oddfellow, who in her rôle of "girl" followed Mrs. Lawrence, never forgot her first impression of the persons assembled there. A farmer's daughter whose social life had been bounded entirely by church activities, could hardly have been more taken aback by the shock of seeing her first ballet. The indoor dress of a high-born Persian lady consists of a number of stiff skirts reaching barely to the knees. Gay stockings meet or fail to meet the petticoats, except when trousers extending to the feet are worn underneath. The upper part of the body does not even pretend to be covered by a scanty zouave jacket, heavily embroidered, which is worn over a thin chemise. (The higher the rank of the lady, the more diaphanous is her chemise.) The hair is stained red with henna and braided in countless little braids; the eyebrows are blackened and extended, if necessary, to meet across the brows. The cheeks are painted, and every attempt is made by artificial means to brighten the large black eyes which centuries of seclusion and ignorance have left so dull — so very, very dull.

But now, at sight of the strange foreigner the dull eyes of the Persians were brightened by their favorite cosmetic

- curiosity. Tean Stuart seemed more akin to them than the other Inglesi because she, too, had evidently dyed her hair with henna. The hair was, to be sure, somewhat curly; but that defect could be removed by means of bear's grease. When they found that the Khanum could not understand them, they begged Miss Oddfellow to explain that if the stranger had no means of getting bear's grease, they would gladly make her a present, also blackening for her evebrows. which would make a great difference in her beauty if they met across her nose. They inquired of Miss Oddfellow, first of all, the name of Miss Stuart's husband (for surely so well-ornamented and so good-looking a lady, though lamentably thin, must be able to get a husband). When told that Miss Stuart was single, they could have wept for pity, but they restrained themselves because they were eager to ask her age. This Miss Oddfellow said she did not know. and was promptly implored to ask the Khanum herself. She explained that among the *Inglesi* it was not customary to ask a lady's age; so they fell to figuring it out among themselves. A number of them, meanwhile, hovered over Jean, all but fingering her clothes and asking the price of everything they saw. Several of them had laid hold of her cloak which she had taken off, and it never afterwards displayed its full complement of jet beads!

Soon tea was brought in little glasses, and sweetmeats of many kinds were handed around. Several wide-eyed houris stood over Jean to see for themselves that she partook of everything. Then water-pipes as well as cigarettes were passed, and great disappointment was expressed when Jean declared through Miss Oddfellow that she never smoked. "She uses henna," they said, "and yet she does not smoke." Miss Oddfellow explained that the Khanum's hair was by nature the color which they saw, and that in America ladies did not smoke, which latter statement might have made Jean smile, if she had understood it. And now

Miss Oddfellow announced that she had brought the pictures of which they had heard from Fatima Khanum, and that if they pleased, she was ready to show them. all crowded around her as she drew out a roll of cheap colored prints such as infant class teachers use to illustrate the Sunday School lesson. The pictures were all of the Life of Christ, and Miss Oddfellow told stories about them for half an hour, Margaret Lawrence answering what questions she could, for the women who sat near her. The questions of the women showed the utmost ignorance - not only of Christianity, but of common morality and of the principles and history of their own religion. It seemed impossible that any of them could ever be roused to anything outside of their purely animal existence. Tean watched the stupid faces searchingly; and she did not see a ray of promise in any one of them. The Moslem doctrine that women have no souls, had evidently worked through all these centuries as a suggestion. Yet they listened and looked at the pictures as long as Miss Oddfellow would show them: and when she put away the roll, they all protested. But she said she had asked the strange Khanum to sing them a hymn about the birth of Christ. Christians liked to sing such hymns at their feast of Christmas, which they had celebrated yesterday. So Jean Stuart sang "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night"; and then Miss Oddfellow explained the words.

After this, the chief Khanum begged for something amusing; and Miss Oddfellow hopelessly told Jean what she had said. Whereupon Jean asked for a guitar which she saw hanging upon the wall, and, striking an attitude, gave them "Funiculi Funicula." And they laughed until the tears made furrows down their fat cheeks.

Then tea was brought in again, and afterwards Miss Oddfellow said she and her friends must be going; but they would like a visit in return from the Khanum and her ladies, and if word were sent the day before, there should be no gentlemen in the house to embarrass them.

Then with many salutations and much talk, the Americans were allowed to go, bearing with them as many sweet-meats as could be pressed into their hands. And the air of the outer world, though it swept through the dirty street of an Oriental city, seemed good in their nostrils after the hot and scented breathlessness of the anderoon.

Jean Stuart carried home a thankful heart under her many-colored necklace. She asked Dan Lawrence that very evening if he could find her a Turkish teacher.

"Perhaps you are catching the fever?" said Dr. Lawrence kindly.

"Not the missionary fever, if that's what you mean, sir, but I don't care to be in a place where I can't make myself understood."

"This is not to be your last anderoon visit, I take it?" The old gentleman smiled at her over his glasses.

"Well, sir, I saw a girl making a kind of embroidery that I should like to learn."

"Ah," said Dr. Lawrence, subsiding into his Review of Reviews. It was he who told his son later where to find the best Turkish teacher for Jean Stuart.

But Miss Oddfellow went home feeling that her afternoon had been a failure because the women had liked the song so much better than the hymri.

"I liked it myself," she thought, as she packed away her new bonnet in the band-box she had brought out from America before the Civil War.

CHAPTER XXV

AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENING

Mr. John Prescott was ushered into the Lawrence sitting-room one evening late in January. There was a change in him which every one began to realize even before he spoke. His figure, which was tall and spare, had begun some time ago to stoop a little; but since the shooting at Akbar more than one of his friends had noticed that he walked as if bowing under a very heavy load. Now he stood erect, and his blue eyes sparkled almost as Dan Lawrence remembered to have seen them when he and Thorley Prescott were boys together.

"Good evening," said Mr. Prescott genially, shaking hands all around, and adding to Jean Stuart, "I am glad to find you at home."

Jean smiled sweetly, wondering in her own mind where else the man could expect to find her of an evening. She was not in the habit of making social calls on the Medusa, nor did she find it exhilarating to spend more than one evening a week with the single ladies at the Seminary; and even that dissipation, enlivened by a fourhanded game of Halma, had been known to pall on her. Her greatest pleasure of an evening was a romp with the Lawrence children, and she had come to a pass where she secretly regretted the earliness of their bedtime. It took a great deal of self-control not to swell their lamentations by joining in the plea, "Can't we stay up just a few minutes longer?"

She was engaged now, from necessity, in the hateful occupation of putting a braid on her walking-skirt, and she felt it rather wonderful that she could smile at all sweetly when congratulated on being found at home. The next moment she sat up straight in her chair, her work falling to the ground, forgotten with all her other grievances. Mr. Prescott was saying:—

"Well, friends, I have news for you. There is reason to be almost certain that Hadji Husain was killed three weeks ago by his own men."

"Killed?" echoed Margaret Lawrence.

"By his own men!" exclaimed Dan.

"Is it possible?" Dr. Lawrence brought the words out slowly, holding up both his fine old hands, and divided in his mind between a feeling of glad relief and instant sorrow over the death of any sinner unreached by the Word of Life.

Jean Stuart said nothing. There was too much going on in her mind.

"How direct is the news?" Dan asked.

"Thorley has been hearing it for at least two weeks," answered Mr. Prescott. "At first he gave no credence to the tidings, but within the last week he has spoken directly to one of the Hadji's men. The fellow claimed to have had no part in the murder, but he described it with details that seemed authentic. Standish mentioned the matter when I was up on the mountain yesterday, and on my questioning him, Thorley admitted what he had heard." Jean Stuart's cheeks, which had been exceedingly pale, flamed suddenly very red. She started to speak, but checked herself as Mr. Prescott continued.

"Of course, I made it my business to go directly to the Governor. Dr. Franklin went with me. We had rather a hard time getting at His Excellency; but finally, late in the afternoon, he granted an audience. Dr. Franklin and I agree that he knows all about the matter and that it is probably safe to believe the reports of Husain's death."

Then Jean Stuart snapped out a few of the words that were seething in her.

"How unkind of Mr. Thorley Prescott to conceal all this from the rest of us." Her voice sounded high and unnatural; and when Mr. Prescott turned to look at her, he saw that her eyes were blazing.

"Thorley did not mean to be unkind," he made haste to say, rather taken aback. "You know he was never much alarmed over the shooting, and living up at the mountain as he does, he perhaps underestimated the anxiety felt by some of us."

"It's unreasonable, of course," Jean said angrily, "for a father to be anxious about his son. I am not surprised that Mr. Prescott disregarded a possibility so essentially human. As for my part in the matter, I suppose it never even occurred to him that I had a part."

"I suggested to him," ventured Mr. Prescott, "that you should have been told at once, and he said," the speaker's hesitation was broken in upon by Jean,—

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said, pardon me for repeating his somewhat informal language, he said you were a 'dead game sport' and that he was certain you at least had never bothered your head again about that silly shooting."

Jean rose to her feet, glittering with rage to the very ends of her hair. "A 'dead game sport,'" she said, choking, "is one who, by carelessness, brings the possibility of death upon another, and then sits back to enjoy the spectacle? I thank Mr. Thorley Prescott sincerely. You will excuse me now? Good evening."

She swept toward the door, leaving her sewing materials and her walking-skirt with its trailing braid wherever they happened to lie. The Lawrences and Mr. Prescott heard her going up the stairs. Suddenly she stopped and ran down again. The door opened; and she came in, a very different Jean from the Fury who had just left the room. "Mr. Prescott," she said, holding out her hand to that

gentleman, who stood bewildered and silent, "please let me thank you for understanding me so well." She smiled charmingly at him, without one trace of any emotion more ardent than that which accompanies the acknowledgment of a social favor. "I begin to feel flattered," she added, "because every one did not realize what a terrible funk I have had ever since I first beheld that greasy green turban on the head of Hadji Husain." She shuddered a little as she said the name. "I believe I have not slept straight through one night since we left the River Aras, and now," she straightened her shoulders and threw back her head, "I suppose you Christians have something that keeps you from feeling as triumphantly glad as I do."

As she spoke, she distributed a mischievous glance that covered a keen look into every one of the four faces.

"I hope you will allow your anger against my son to diminish." Mr. Prescott was always a man of mild persistence. "I assure you —"

Jean Stuart held up her hand. "When did I ever dare to say I was angry at your son?" she challenged him. "It's my Turkish teacher who will be angry at me, if I don't go right away and study my lesson; so I must say 'Good evening' and another hearty 'Thank you.'"

Later in the evening, when Dan and his wife were left alone in the sitting-room, Margaret said:—

"I can't help wondering, Dan, whether Miss Stuart would have been quite as angry to-night if Thorley Prescott had been coming to see her lately as often as he did before Christmas."

"Why, what difference would that have made?" asked Dan.

"Don't pretend to be stupid," answered his wife. "You know you're not."

Dan's face creased into a smile, but he turned away to his book. Presently Margaret Lawrence began again,

"I do think Mr. Prescott is more to be pitied than any one I know. He's lonelier than ever, now that Thorley stays on the mountain."

Dan looked up. "Can you call a man lonely when his lot is overflowing with — conversation?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Margaret emphatically. "Let's see," she went on, "he has been married four years. Do you suppose it would have happened, if Thorley had been out here to keep him company?"

Dan laid down his book, took off his gold-bowed glasses, and stretched himself. "Well, no, I suppose it wouldn't. In the old days Thor and his father were all the world to each other. Then Thor went to America and delayed his coming back year after year; but I think it was that last extra year in Germany that did the business. I never saw a man so disappointed as Mr. Prescott."

"He had malaria that next summer," Margaret went on.

"And broke both his pairs of glasses," Dan added. "She read to him every day all through his vacation."

"And that settled it," finished Margaret.

"It's very strange," mused Dan. "I never thought she was so—so—"

"Objectionable," suggested Margaret.

"Well, yes," Dan consented meditatively. "I might perhaps have said obnoxious, or even outrageous."

"Why, Dan!"

"Why wasn't she that way when she was Miss Little of the Seminary? She seemed pleasant enough then. I used to think she rather went out of her way to be agreeable."

Margaret smiled wisely. "I must say," she agreed, "that her stepson doesn't make it easy for her to be amiable."

"I sometimes think," said Dan, "that it's almost a relief to Mr. Prescott, now that Thor's away. He can go up and see him peaceably on the mountain. Don't you remember how genial he was that day at dinner?"

"He's awfully proud of Thor."

"Yes, and he has a right to be. That relief work is a magnificent thing. If only it can be kept up, it will do more good than any amount of preaching."

"Oh, Dan, do you really think so?"

"Of course I do. What's the use of preaching to men unless you can find them scope for the preaching to act itself out in their lives: and how can they act as they ought when every moment is a struggle for daily bread, when they're afraid to be industrious and frugal because the results of their work are sure to be snatched from them? Those men working under our protection are learning lessons which a thousand Sundays of church services could never teach them. And as for Thor," Dan's face broke into its most radiant smile. "I used to be afraid that the boy would never learn how to be contented in this work. In the Treasury he never would have learned, but now, thank God, he's getting his chance. I told you about his Sunday School in the village, didn't I? Dear me, I have to laugh now, when I remember how ashamed he was to have me hear what the children said to him! He must have been teaching them ever since those families settled in the deserted houses."

"I wish he wouldn't be so secret about it," said Margaret. "He ought to let his light shine."

"Give him time, give him time. It's shining brightly enough on the mountain. Roger Standish told me he considered the Black Saib a perfectly great missionary."

Mrs. Lawrence wrinkled her forehead. "I'd give anything," she said, "if I dared to give Jean Stuart a little advice. Amy Lea has lost seven pounds in the last month, and honestly, Dan, it is not fair. He's ages younger than Miss Stuart, anyway; and there's Mr. Freyer, too. Perhaps she doesn't mean to be so fascinating, but it really seems sometimes as if she did. Do you suppose it would do any good if I spoke?"

"I must say," Dan admitted rather sadly, "that I am disappointed in Miss Stuart. I didn't think she was a flirt, yet Roger—" The door into the hall which had been left unlatched, was suddenly pushed open. Miss Stuart appeared in the doorway, her cheeks very red and her eyes sparkling mischievously.

"I couldn't help hearing," she said, "from 'disappointed' onward. Excuse me just a minute while I gather up my goods and my chattels and don't look at me; for I verily believe 'my face is black.' Go on with the next person, though, if you will. I should love to hear you. Truly I never heard you gossip before, except through Danny!"

She shook her head demurely at Dan and vanished with the skirt and her workbag heaped up in her arms.

"I like that girl," declared Dan. "She has a temper, but she knows when not to use it. I have an idea that after this, she'll send Standish about his business."

CHAPTER XXVI

ANOTHER LETTER HOME

MURAMNA, PERSIA, February 28, 1904.

My DEAR AUNT CORDELIA,

Your last letter with the account of Uncle Philip's new Rembrandt, gave me the best laugh I have had for many a long day. I chuckled over it for half an hour at least and have been snickering since whenever I thought of it. That Uncle Phil, of all people, should have been so outrageously swindled! I wonder which was more disgusted, you or he!

I rode way out to the College to share the joke with Dr. MacColl, she being the only one of my friends here, who would know a Rembrandt from a hole in the wall. But she was so much taken up with a scheme of her own that she paid no attention to my story; and when I found out what the scheme was and that it could be stretched to include me, I forgot that there was anything in the world as civilized as a fake painting.

Dr. MacColl's scheme is for a trip to Kurdistan. She has been summoned by a special messenger to go and see the wife of a Kurdish chief, who lives in a mountain village about five days' journey from here. Dr. MacColl is anxious to obey the summons for two reasons. One is that the missionaries may thus find access to these wildest of all wild people, whom it has hitherto been impossible to reach by any form of missionary strategy. The other reason is that

the doctor thinks this woman has a well-developed case of an interesting disease which she is anxious to track in the cause of Science.

Now there are only two men who would care to risk taking the doctor on this wild-goose chase into the Kurdish moun-One is Dan Lawrence, who has to go in that direction on his way to a place in Turkey, where he has mission business. Theother is Thorley Prescott, who has a special affinity for Kurds, having collogued with them on every possible occasion from his infancy until now, and having gradually collected a knowledge of their dialects, which are like no other language in the world. I verily believe he is more akin to these ferocious tribes than to his own mild, blue-eyed father, who is a parson and a theological professor to the very backbone. It happens that the work on the mountain, which Mr. Prescott, the younger, is superintending, can be left just now in charge of the native foreman. little for the men to do up there, until the ground softens so that they can get fresh clay for pipe-making and begin to dig the ditches for laying the waterway to the city. So most of the men have gone to look after their families, and the remnant can be trusted to behave themselves.

I don't know why I write all this to you, since you have shown no interest in my industrial schemes, except when you warned me to leave them alone for the good of my pocket-book. But I'm coming to that later. Let me finish the subject in hand by informing you that the expedition to Kurdistan is to start day after to-morrow under the guidance of the chief whose wife is ill, that Dr. MacColl is to be escorted by Thorley Prescott, that Dan Lawrence is to travel with them as far as his way lies with theirs; and that they have unanimously appointed as tent-guest and travelling companion, no less a person than your niece! You don't know how pleased I am with this invitation, nor with how much alacrity I have accepted it. I will now admit

to you a truth which I have hitherto attempted (vainly. I fear) to exclude from my epistolary communications. For the last two months. I have been bored to extinction. lightly over the very obvious reasons for this sad state of things. You yourself, in your late letters, have shown a realizing sense of certain very tiresome features in my situation. Of others, you can never have any conception; nor would I wish you to have. The one fact, that you pick out as the worst feature of my hard lot, the only thing that has offered me any satisfaction or amusement, shows that your sympathy for me is only rudimentary. My teaching is all that keeps me from setting off alone across the mountains toward HOME. Imagine yourself set down among a few perfectly virtuous people who have no desire in life except to better the condition of an evil-smelling multitude by means of beliefs which you could never bring yourself to swallow. Imagine yourself compelled often to sit down at table with Nestorian persons of a very doubtful cleanliness and a fixed aversion to eating with anything but their fingers. Imagine yourself restricted as concerns social life to the company of fifteen missionaries, all of whom are so busy saving souls that they have no time to bother with you. Why, Aunt Cordelia, if it wasn't for the children, I should die! Imagine me considering it a holiday treat of the very most dissipated kind when I am asked to visit an anderoon where I behold a lot of undressed and highly painted females, each of whom asks me the same impertinent questions with exactly the same degree of curiosity in her large dull eves. Imagine me restricted to riding alone because no one has time to go with me. (Of course I take a servant or two. I should not be safe without.)

You are indebted for these details hitherto withheld, to the fact that by the time this letter reaches you, my contract will have expired, and I shall be preparing to start HOME. How I shall go, who will attend me, what will be my route and what my means of conveyance, I know not; but on April 15th, I start.

To speak seriously, Aunt Cordelia, I have a plan at last. The mail this week brought me a letter from Bertha Courtlandt Mullins. She is on her way to join Robert, who is still kicking his heels in the neighborhood of Bushire on the Persian Gulf. Bertha expects to reach Bushire (by way of the Suez Canal) in about two weeks. She says that a telegram from me will bring them overland to my rescue as fast as a caravan can travel. Now I call that mighty kind of Bertha and of Robert. Of Mr. Mullins I say nothing, because I fancy that he has nothing to say.

I expect to be away on this Kurdish trip for about two weeks (the spring vacation makes it possible for me to leave my Duties). After that, if I am still of the same mind, I shall telegraph Bertha to come. It will take them at least a month to get here, and then — Good-by, Muramna!

All this should answer the questions about the gossip you have evidently been hearing. How on earth gossip can have reached you from this mammon-forsaken place, I don't know. Let me tell you, without further ado, that there isn't a word of truth in any of it. There is no widower with three children here. Let me inform you outright that since I left school, I have never passed so long a time without an offer of marriage. As for the money I am supposed to have spent for aqueducts and cathedrals, why didn't you just ease your mind by speaking to Mr. Erskine? He would have told you that my expenses since I reached here, have all been covered by the rental of my New York house. Even my Lakewood rent I have not touched, and what I have spent of my regular income has been for the lawsuit and a few other things that have nothing to do with my life here. You are the only one to whom I would make these explanations, but you and Uncle Philip have a right to know that I am not doing anything foolish. Of course, I have given some money to help along the work here because that was the only way I could acknowledge my great obligations to these people who rescued me from a grave predicament, and then forced upon me the hospitality of their own homes. I would not have you think I am ungrateful to them because I have passed so many undiverted hours in their midst. Most of them are charming people, whose acquaintance I should like to cultivate, if they weren't so infernally busy. Do excuse me. I could not help it.

And now I must bring this long epistle to a close. Let it make up, please, for the letters you are not likely to get next week or the week after. And don't worry about my trip; for if anything should happen to me (which it can't when I am doubly protected by the Kurdish Chief and the Black Saib), you will have heard about it by cable long before this letter reaches you.

Don't think for the world that I am ungrateful to the Lawrences or the Franklins or Dr. MacColl. They are the dearest people I ever met. Miss Oddfellow and Miss Trench are dears, too; but I don't know them so well. And I like Mr. Prescott immensely — the older one, I mean — with the younger I have not improved my acquaintance, as I have not seen him to speak to since Christmas. Dan Lawrence brings me his questions about the work at Akbar; and I let him settle them to suit himself. I'm proud of that work at Akbar. It's been paying expenses for some time, and it has made over a band of ruffians into a community of self-respecting artisans. You needn't tell me it hasn't paid for itself many times over.

After all, even I, who am blind, I suppose, to the spiritual side of the work these missionaries are doing, even I can't help seeing that they are doing something, that it makes a change in this wicked place for them just to be here, and that no one can ever be quite the same again who has passed under

the influence of their lives. I may not go to church any more when I come home; but the world will be a different place to me all my life because I have lived for a whole winter in the same house with Grandpa Lawrence and Dan and Margaret and Ruth and Danny, and because I've seen them living Christ. You may think that's a strange thing for me to say; but I've seen it and felt it and known it and wondered at it. Perhaps that's one big reason why I feel so awfully lonely —

If the mail wasn't just going out, you'd never get this letter as it is. My pen has run on in spite of me, and now I find Mr. L. is waiting.

In great haste, Your ever loving JEAN.

CHAPTER XXVII

THORLEY SURPRISES HIS FATHER

THORLEY PRESCOTT scowled as he finished reading the note his father had brought up to him at Akbar. When he had read it twice through, he flung it savagely down on the table.

"What right had Dr. MacColl," he demanded, "to invite anybody, without consulting me?"

"The doctor came to me as soon as it developed that Miss Stuart would like to be her companion on this journey. The doctor, of course, would not be averse to going alone, if it were necessary; but the trip will be much more agreeable if another lady shares it with her. We both felt and Dan agreed that you would have no objection to taking Miss Stuart. Can you tell me why her going is so displeasing to you? I thought you had come to like her very well."

"Like her!" said Thorley angrily. He had been fidgeting and fuming all through his father's speech, getting ready to interrupt as soon as he could think of the right thing to say. But his father finished speaking before anything suitable had developed; so Thorley snatched desperately at an opinion which he had long since put aside.

"What has *liking* to do with it?" he growled. "She's rash and ignorant, and she doesn't know how to travel in Persia."

"Oh, pshaw," said Mr. Prescott, with unusual impatience. "She knows enough. Very few women would have been as brave as she was on her journey out here. It wasn't her

fault that things happened as they did. Besides, you and Dan will be in control of this expedition; and a woman doesn't need to know anything, when there are men to look after her."

Thorley muttered that he didn't care to be responsible for running people into danger.

"Danger!" cried Mr. Prescott. "Have you reason to suppose that you are liable to attack? Isn't the Hadji dead?"

Thorley shrugged his shoulders. "Even as to that," he said dryly, "I have never been sure; but there are more rascals in the Kurdish Mountains than Hadji Husain."

Mr. Prescott regarded his son for some moments with a perplexity that was almost comical.

At last he said, "My dear son, I have never before known you to err on the side of caution. What is the matter with you, anyway?"

Thorley laughed sardonically. "The matter is that I do not wish to go on a camping party with Miss Jean Stuart; and," he added, planting his feet and squaring his jaw, "nothing that you can say, will make me go."

Mr. Prescott sat down in the nearest chair and made a helpless gesture with his hands. "What are we to do?" he asked plaintively. "Miss Stuart has been invited to go, and she accepted the invitation with a pleasure that was almost pathetic."

Thorley's face changed, and he stood uneasily on one foot. "Does she *care* about going?" he demanded.

"She's wild with joy at the prospect. She met me last night with her face all aglow, and begged me to be sure to tell you how delighted she is about the camping trip. She seemed to think you knew about her being of the party—and perhaps I was wrong, Thor—I hadn't the heart to undeceive her."

Thorley's expression during these remarks had changed

again and again: from perplexity to pain, from pain to gratitude, from gratitude to joy and back again to perplexity. He sat down now and rubbed one hand over his forehead while the other lay clenched on the table.

"If she wants to go," he said slowly, "of course it must be managed. She must have whatever she wants, if we can give it to her." Then, after a moment of perplexed thought, "I don't see why she should care so much about it."

"The winter has been pretty dull for her," ventured John Prescott. "I fancy she has never before been confined to a regular round of duties. And she is very fond of an outdoor life. She told me that she spends the better part of her winters in Lakewood where she can be all the time in the fresh air. There is no form of exercise that she can take here, except an occasional horseback ride."

Thorley had been looking more and more dejected. "I never thought of that," he said very meekly. "Of course it has been as dull as a funeral procession. It's no wonder she wants to get away; and she must go on this trip at any cost."

He sank again into thought. Presently he looked up with a new idea which relieved him, evidently, but did not please him much.

"Why should I be the man to go, Father? You need a change more than I do. The Seminary will be having vacation — why not go in my place? Yes, that will fix everything."

Thorley rose and began pacing the room. Mr. Prescott's eyes followed the motions of his son. It was evident that something of importance lay behind Thorley's behavior. Mr. Prescott was neither suspicious nor observant. He had not seen anything particular, as he himself would have phrased it, in Thorley's behavior toward Miss Stuart. He had overheard two servants speculating as to whether his son would not soon declare himself to Miss Stuart's host as "an

eager one." Then, too, Mrs. Prescott had called his attention to something that happened at the Christmas party. He had been so very bold as to tell her that her imagination was running away with her; she had retorted that he would see, and he was now very sure that if there had been anything since to see, she would long ago have pointed it out to him with details that might have thrown light on the present obscurity. As it was, he had nothing to guide him, except a feeling that he must find some way of helping Thor. It was impossible for him, as head of the Seminary, to go on the Kurdish trip. That, at least, was a settled fact; and he roused himself finally to say so. Thorley argued the matter point by point, and at last accepted the impossibility with a grimness that seemed to cover a gleam of satisfaction.

"It may be, however," said Mr. Prescott, feeling his way very slowly, "that Freyer, who is perfectly well now, could be induced to go in your place."

"That old maid!" cried Thorley.

"He knows the mountains perfectly, and his acquaintance with Kurdish dialects is almost equal to your own."

"The Kurds have no use for him. He's nothing more to them than a Nestorian."

"Besides, it might be doing him a favor. The ladies say he would like to induce Miss Stuart to remain here as his wife."

"His wife! Is the man a fool?" Thorley gave the wall a kick that brought down a bushel or so of plaster.

"Of course we all are aware that Miss Stuart is not just the person for a missionary's wife, but—"

"For God's sake, Father, if you can't talk sense, keep still." Thorley roared the last words in a tone that made his father wince. "I beg your pardon," the Thunderer added, less vehemently. Then he turned away and sat down at the table with his back to his father.

Mr. Prescott went over to him and put his hand on the broad shoulder. "Sammy," he said, "can't you tell your old Dad about it?"

Thorley look up, startled, into the kind blue eyes. Never since his mother's death had his father called him Sammy. Never since his return to Persia had either of them spoken the old nickname, Dad. Thorley had looked up, ready to resent this return to the old intimacy. But it was not in him, angry and sullen though he was, to withstand the love in his father's face. Down went the proud black head until his face was hidden in his arms that rested on the table.

"You love her, my son?" said John Prescott, very gently. "A noble love will make a better man of you; and I congratulate you, even if she has said 'No."

Thorley squirmed under his father's hand, as if every word were a blow. At the last one, he jumped from his chair with his face aflame.

"Do you suppose I would ask her," he cried, "even if I could?"

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Prescott, with a quiet emphasis that was more than a match for the violence of his son. "You have everything good to give her—the love of a strong man, and a share in the greatest work on earth. What more can any woman ask? If that is not enough for her, if that is not more to her than everything else, she is no mate for your mother's son."

"Oh, Father," said Thorley.

John Prescott, who was the taller man, looked down into the dark eyes that squarely met his own. He had nothing more to say.

Thorley turned away very soon and began pacing up and down the room, quickly and with restless strides. His father sat down again helplessly in the chair by the table. At last Thorley came to a standstill at the side of the table.

"Father," he said abruptly, "I'm going to tell you something. I'm engaged to marry Esther Wilcox."

Mr. Prescott started from his chair with an expression of extreme astonishment. "Upon my word, Thor," he said lamely, "I had no idea of that."

Thorley laughed.

"Don't do that, my boy," said Mr. Prescott.

"Shall I cry?" said Thorley.

Mr. Prescott made a deprecating gesture. "Are you going to tell me anything more?" he asked.

"Why yes," said Thorley, jauntily. "I may as well. She wrote me only last week that she wished I would tell you of our engagement."

"You correspond?" said Mr. Prescott weakly.

"I believe that is considered the thing to do when one is engaged. Circumstances forbid our writing every day, but—"

"But how — when — why?"

"How do we get the letters into the mail-bag? When do we remove them? Why are they not seen by all the members of both Stations? It is a wonder."

"Thorley, I beg - "

"Well, I'm explaining as fast as I can."

"I don't mean —"

"I know you don't; but for once I want to talk. I want you to know that I send my letters under cover to Mr. Smith, and that hers come to me with the address typewritten on envelopes that have Smith's name printed in the corner. I want you to know that I asked her to marry me when I was taking her to Tabriz in the fall. It seems she hated to leave here, she didn't know the Smiths, with whom she was going to live. She was lonely and homesick and miserable. I could hear her crying nights when Miss Trotter was asleep. (Miss Trotter of Takresht was with us, you remember.) Well, one day she cried while I was trying to

cheer her up a bit, and — the first thing I knew we were engaged."

Mr. Prescott had been nodding very gravely all through the last part of this account.

"Do you love her at all, Thorley?" he asked.

"Why yes, I suppose I did," said Thorley slowly. "I always enjoyed being with her. She was quiet and sensible and — and — sweet. I like her now, very much, and I'd do anything I could to make her happy, but —" he paused and a very different look came into his face, "the sun, moon, and stars don't rise and set for me in her smile."

"Thorley," said Mr. Prescott decidedly, "you have no business to marry a woman unless you love her supremely. With your temperament, you would both be wretched, and it would be worse for her than for you. You know, my son, that I am not one who regards a promise lightly; but if I were you, I would write and tell this young woman how things are with you. It would cost her less pain now, than to find later that she does not possess your best love."

Thorley regarded his father for some time. Once he smiled in a manner that made the older man turn away with a groan. Then he laughed discordantly, "Father," he said, "if you were engaged to a woman and found that you loved another woman, what would you do?"

"I would try, if possible, to kill the second love, and restore the first."

"But if absence and work and will power did not help you, what then?"

"I would tell the truth to Number One and leave myself in her hands," said his father. "If she were a true woman, that would be enough."

Thorley laughed again.

"Don't do that, Thorley," cried John Prescott, "please don't."

"I won't again," said Thorley. "Well, suppose that you

had left yourself in the hands of Number One, and suppose that Number One had been kind enough to keep her hands upon you, what then?"

"You have!" cried Mr. Prescott. "She has! How could she?"

Thorley shrugged his shoulders. "I wrote her," he said grimly, "in full. In her answer she made no mention of my confession, except to say that she loved me too much to take anything amiss that I did or omitted to do, and that she was sure all would yet turn out well for both of us, if we stood by our old trust in each other. That's all she has ever said."

John Prescott bowed his head over the table and was silent a long time. "Sammy," he said at last, "let me write and tell her she must release you."

"You, Father!" said Thorley. The father, looking up swiftly, at the changed voice, saw that his son was smiling steadily and lovingly at him. "Who taught me to keep my promises, Dad?" said the young man softly.

The tears came into John Prescott's eyes, and into his mind came many images — a little, black-haired, stubborn boy was one of them, and a lady with dark ringlets and laughing eyes, and a man, blue-eyed and brown-haired, straight as an arrow and sure as an archer that the target he aimed at was the only right one. Yes, he, John Prescott, had taught that little black-haired boy to keep his promises; and the lady with ringlets had helped him. John Prescott had been effectually silenced. But there was one thing more that he must ask his son before he went his way down the mountain, and presently he summoned his courage to ask it.

"Thor," he said, "what are you going to do about the trip?"

"Go on it, of course," said Thorley, promptly, "and you will say nothing to any one about my hesitation, not to any one, Father, please."

Mr. Prescott looked dreadfully hurt; but he answered with great dignity, "I should not think of mentioning it, my son."

Thorley went ruthlessly on. "If Mrs. Prescott —"

John Prescott held up his hand. "That will do, Thorley," he said, and Thorley became in an instant the little black-haired boy, stubborn, but amenable to discipline. It was many a long day since he had heard such a tone in his father's voice.

With new resolve, Mr. Prescott went on. "Would it not be safer to let Miss Stuart know of your engagement, since she is to be so intimately associated with you?"

"Why safer? I hope I can be trusted to hold my tongue without her help."

"But —"

"Well, what?"

"Words are not always needed to call out an answer from the heart of a woman."

"What!"

"She might find herself in danger —"

"Stop, Father," said Thorley, very quietly, "there is no danger for Jean Stuart in my love. *She*, thank God, is peerless. How could I hope to win her, even if I worked with all my might?"

"Stranger things have happened, Thor," said Mr. Prescott with a smile. "She might do worse than to love you, my boy."

"Don't talk like that," cried Thorley. "Come, we've said enough. Let's go down to the factory."

But Mr. Prescott sent for his horse and went home. Of his thoughts as he rode away, many were sad. He shook his head often as he pondered over Thorley's future; but around his mouth there lingered a little smile of great happiness, when he remembered that once more, his Marty's little Sammy had called him "Dad."

CHAPTER XXVIII

POLITENESS DEFERRED

MISS STUART was on her knees packing her saddle-bags for the journey, Mrs. Lawrence helping her with muscle and advice. At the critical moment, when a pair of shoes was threatening to crowd out a looking-glass and a bottle of brandy, there was a knock at the door, and Ruth came quietly in.

"I'm sorry to disturve you," she said quaintly, "but Mr. Freyer is downstairs, and he says he must see Miss Stuart right off on some very important perivate business." Her eyes dilated when she came to the word private, for Ruth loved a secret even more than most children.

Miss Stuart looked up, rather annoyed. "Why couldn't he have come at some other time?" she exclaimed. "I suppose he wants to talk about Mary's music, and it'll take him the rest of the afternoon. Go down, Ruthie, please, and tell him I'm dreadfully busy packing, and I'm not fit to be seen, and ask him if he can't come back in an hour."

"But Miss Stuart, he said it was *important*, and he seems in a nawful hurry. I think you look very nice, and I'll help Mamma finish packing."

Miss Stuart pulled the sides of the saddle-bag together with an ostentatious groan and looked up under her eyelashes to see what the Lawrences thought of her misbehavior. She jerked the strap through the buckle while Margaret pushed on the bulging contents of the saddle-bag. When the tongue had skipped into its hole, Jean rose very slowly

from her knees, dusted off her hands and the front of her skirt, and looked into the glass to see what had become of her hair.

"Ruth," she said, "you may tell Mr. Freyer with my compliments, that if he has time to wait, I'll be down presently."

"Yes, I will," said Ruth, "and then shall I come back and help you?"

Miss Stuart went over to her desk and began in a leisurely way to fold up important-looking documents that lay scattered about. "Well, what do you think, my lamb?" she said, half shutting her eyes as she surveyed what she could of the not immaculate garments she was wearing. "Is it worth while to change my clothes, or shall I go down just as I am, after having washed my hands, perhaps, as a sop to Cerberus."

"I don't know who that is," said Ruth, very solemnly, "but I should think Mr. Freyer might be s'prised to see you with your hands quite so dirty; and now I look at it, there's a good deal of dust on your skirt still, but I think I could brush it off for you."

Jean gave her skirt a kick and squinted under her arm at the back of it. "It is shocking!" she said. "I suppose I may as well change into something decent. Why couldn't the man choose some other time?"

"I'll go down and entertain him," said Mrs. Lawrence, "and then you come when you are ready. Let Ruth help you all she can."

"Thank you," said Jean, "don't entertain him too well, or he'll forget what he has to tell me."

"No danger of that, I wager," Mrs. Lawrence threw back a saucy glance at her guest as she left the room.

"Now I wonder what your mother means by that?" said Miss Stuart, stepping out of the dusty skirt and giving it a little kick as she glanced around the room littered with things she had decided not to take. There were times when Jean Stuart heartily disliked being her own lady's maid, and this was one of them.

"Whatever Mamma says," answered Ruth, picking up the skirt and laying it carefully across a chair, "I'm always sure she means something polite. I sometimes think," she added, surveying Miss Stuart with her head on one side, "that Mamma is a little politer even than you."

Miss Stuart threw back her head with a laugh so merry that it brought Danny running to knock at her door.

"I heard you laugh," he said, when admitted, "and I thought I'd come and see what the fun was. What you doing, Ruth, with Miss Stuart's things?"

"Helping her get ready," said Ruth, proudly. "Mr. Freyer is waiting downstairs to see her on very important perivate business."

"Huh," said Danny decidedly. "I wouldn't fix up much for him. He's always having secrets; and I can't see that they ever amount to much."

Miss Stuart stopped scrubbing her hands to look at the child. "What makes you say that, Danny?" she asked.

"Oh," said Danny, with great impatience, "he's always coming here to talk with Papa, and he's always very secret about it and has to come up to Papa's study, and once when he had been here a long time — and Papa was very busy, too — after he had gone away, Papa said —" Danny paused to lick his lips with the keenest relish of what he was about to impart; but the virtue of his sister had come to the fore, and she interrupted him relentlessly.

"Danny," she said, "you know Mamma doesn't like us to tell what people say. You ought to stop."

"It's all right to do it when a grown-up asks you questions," said Danny. "They all do it — even Mamma when she talks in a whisper to Papa and doesn't know we can hear her."

"We-ell, it is all right to do to your husband," said Ruth. "Mamma told me so once; but she doesn't allow even grown-ups to do it to her, hardly at all; because once I heard Uncle Thorley Prescott begin to tell something that Mrs. Whiting had said. It was when Mrs. Whiting had scolded Miss Wilcox for shaking Sammy when Sammy had made her spill red ink on her new dress that just came from America, and Uncle Thor talked a good deal about it one evening—"

"He hardly ever talks much," interrupted Danny.

"Well, that evening he talked a lot," said Ruth, with emphasis, "and finely, Mamma told him not to cast asparagus — that meant to stop, I guess; anyway he did stop just when he was going to tell what Mrs. Whiting said to Miss Wilcox. And I was sorry," Ruth finished, with a frank regret that nearly convulsed Jean.

"What time of year was it?" inquired Danny, judicially. "I don't remember. — Why, Danny? — Oh, yes I do.

There was snow, because Uncle Thor had been taking Miss Wilcox in a sleigh, and there was plenty of room but they wouldn't let us go; and you cried. Don't you remember, Danny?"

"There was snow, was there?" said Danny triumphantly, he being so intent on his own point that he would not be allured, even into this enticing side-track of ancient grievance. "Then if there was snow, there couldn't be asparagus, because that only grows in summer."

"Danny Lawrence, that's what Mamma said to him, and I guess if you can't believe what Mamma says—"

Ruth stopped in horror, as if that were a point beyond which she had no words to take her.

"Of course I believe her," said Danny complacently, "but even Mamma makes mistakes sometimes. Don't you remember last week about my cannon that she said was not in her closet and it was? You have to look for

things yourself sometimes, even when you are small, and I s'pose you have to do the same in later life. Isn't that so, Miss Stuart?"

None of them had accomplished any work for some time, the discussion having absorbed them all; but now Miss Stuart thought best to call back the general attention from philosophy to manual labor.

"It's always good to keep your eyes open, Danny," she replied. "Suppose you see if you can fish out the mate to this side-comb from under the bureau."

"Not always, Miss Stuart," said Danny mischievously, "you don't think so always."

"Well, not at bedtime," said Miss Stuart, carelessly, "here, take this umbrella and poke; but don't break the comb."

Danny did as he was told; but after a cursory and utterly fruitless brandishing of the umbrella, he bobbed up again very red in the face, and far more eager in his pursuit of ideas than of side-combs.

"Miss Stuart," he persisted, "do you mean that it's always good to keep your eyes open all through the day?"

"Why, certainly, Danny. Why do you ask me that so many times?"

Danny's face radiated triumph. "Then how about Sammy Whiting," he demanded, "when we're saying the Lord's Prayer in school?"

Miss Stuart threw back her head in a laugh that would have brought Danny running from the ends of the earth. He threw back his head and laughed too; and there was in both their voices the same ring of invincible merriment. Then she sat down and opened her arms to him and he ran into them, and they laughed together until the tears ran down both their faces. Ruth laughed too; but in a puzzled way that showed she was laughing only because they did. At last Miss Stuart loosened her hold on Danny and

began to wipe her eyes. He groped for his handkerchief but stopped groping suddenly to hug her and to say in his most affectionate tones:—

"Oh, Miss Stuart, I do love you! You are funny your-self and you laugh at my fun. I wish you were my aunt or at least my mother-in-law!"

This sent Miss Stuart off again, while Ruth said gravely, "Why, Danny, you have to be married to have a mother-in-law!"

"Do you?" said Danny. "Well, I don't want to wait until then. Why can't you be our aunt now? Aunt Kate is, and so is Uncle Thorley."

Ruth set up a shout at this; and they all laughed together until Mrs. Lawrence appeared at the door, inquiring with a twinkle in her eyes whether the children were not hindering Miss Stuart.

Jean rose, wiped her eyes again, and meekly hooked up her collar.

"Oh, Mrs. Lawrence," she said, making for the stairs without even stopping to look in the glass, "if only I could be as polite as you are!"

CHAPTER XXIX

MISS STUART DISPOSES

When at last Jean Stuart entered the sitting-room, Mr. Freyer was standing over by the piano nervously fingering some music that stood on the rack. This confirmed Jean in her idea that he had come to talk about Mary's music; and as soon as she had greeted him, she began to tell him how much Mary was improving in her playing and what a good voice she was likely to have, if she took care not to strain it now.

To her surprise, Mr. Freyer's reply was rather impatient. "Yes, yes," he said, "that is all very gratifying," at this point he made a stiff bow, "and many thanks are due for your helpful interest in Mary, but I had come here with my mind made up to talk with you very seriously on another subject. May I ask for a few moments of your best attention?"

"Why, yes," said Jean, considerably mystified by his behavior. It had some of the signs preliminary to a proposal of marriage; but Mr. Freyer had only a day or two before this, honored Jean through the better part of an evening, with a disquisition on the qualities essential to a missionary's wife; and having found herself deficient in every one of these qualities, with the possible exception of a cheerful temper, she could not now believe that he had so far lost sight of his ideals as to have chosen her for his wife.

So she looked at him with wide-open gray eyes from which the laughter had not entirely disappeared, and settled herself with some deliberation in the chair he placed for her.

200

Mr. Freyer, not forgetful of his coat tails, even at this evidently crucial moment, seated himself opposite Jean, and with great solemnity cleared his throat.

"My dear young lady," he said in his best pulpit voice, and as he said it, he leaned forward and possessed himself reverently but firmly of Jean's hand.

"Good heavens!" thought Miss Stuart, "the man is going to propose, and what shall I do?"

Now Miss Stuart of New York, Lakewood, and Bar Harbor had dealt in the course of the last decade with more than one proposal of marriage. She was not the woman to lead a man on deliberately to his undoing; nor was she the one to deny herself the incense of a certain amount of homage when she was reasonably sure that the paying of it would not permanently injure the worshipper. To her, the preliminaries to marriage had come to seem like a game. You made your way peacefully toward your own goal until somebody came and gave the ball a whack in the other direction. You got the ball back if you could. If not, you had to let your enemy keep it and win the game; but it was not your fault if, while you were winning, the adversary fell off his horse and smashed a bone or two. Jean Stuart remembered a number of riders who had come to grief and croppers in her field. The accident had never been fatal nor even disfiguring to any one of them; and in a little more than nine cases out of ten, she had very soon enjoyed the ironic privilege of seeing those same riders busily at play again in some one's else field!

Now Jean had no reason to think that the rigor of the game would be more injurious to Mr. Freyer than it had been in the past to her other opponents. And yet it gave her a very unpleasant feeling when she saw his mallet swinging toward her ball. Perhaps she was only out of training. Perhaps her ideas of sport had changed a little in the past few months. At any rate she exerted herself to do some

very rapid thinking while his hand reached out to take hers.

"My dear young lady," he repeated and cleared his throat again.

"Yes, Mr. Freyer, I know what you have come for, and I don't intend that you shall say a word about it to-day. I'm not at all in the mood."

Mr. Freyer's mouth, which had been open to speak, stayed open until Jean had finished. Then it closed while Mr. Freyer reflected for a moment.

"But, my dear young lady," he began again, and Jean, having taken advantage of his amazement to draw away her hand, saw that it would be safe now to let him go on for a sentence or two.

"How is it possible," he continued, "for you to know what I have to say? I made up my mind last night only after much prayer that I would speak conditionally to you. I have not given you that warning, I know, to which the delicate sensibilities of a lady are entitled; but you were going away, and I wished before your departure to lodge in your mind a thought which might bear fruit against your return."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Freyer," said Jean, "your wishes for my welfare are exceedingly kind. Let me say once for all that I thank you sincerely."

Mr. Freyer deprecatingly held up both hands. To have the words taken out of his mouth in this way was almost more than the little man could bear. He felt that Miss Stuart was not showing quite the delicacy of mind for which he had given her credit; and he began to be really irritated when she went on after her sincere thanks without giving him a chance to put in a word.

"But," Jean Stuart continued, and as she said the words she could not help feeling that they were a master-stroke, "but I am sure that my mind is not the soil in which your religious counsels are most likely to flourish." "That may be," said Mr. Freyer, seriously, "that may be unfortunately only too true, but," he paused long enough to possess himself again of her hand, and she, very much bewildered at having apparently helped rather than hindered his cause, let it lie for a moment in his, "but I am willing to take the risk that the work of grace which has inclined you to help our Cause by material agencies, will at last so work in your heart that you will be fitted for the spiritual labors and joys of a missionary's—"

Jean Stuart snatched her hand away and cut off his conclusion so promptly that she never knew whether he intended to say "life" or "wife."

"Mr. Freyer," she exclaimed impatiently, "excuse my interrupting you, but I cannot tell you too promptly or too conclusively that I have no desire to fit myself for anything that begins or ends with the word missionary. What I have done for the people here has been done entirely for the purpose of relieving and pleasing myself. When I go away, I shall take pains to forget the misery of Mohammedans, Nestorians, and Kurds as fast as ever I can. And before so very long I shall be going away."

"I had hoped," said Mr. Freyer, doubtfully.

"Yes," said Jean, "I know that more than one of you had hoped that I would come around to your way of thinking. To you it is the only way. I am of a different mind. I have my own opinions, which I change only for reasons that seem to me valid. But I have also a great respect for the opinions of others. I have nothing whatever to say against what you believe. I have never engaged with any of you in controversy or argument. May I ask that you will extend to me the same courtesy?"

"But, Miss Stuart," protested Mr. Freyer, completely thrown off his train of thought, "we consider it our duty as Christians to influence the religious life of those about us."

"The religious life," said Jean, more quietly, "ah, that is

a different matter, is it not? Some of you are bringing influence to bear on *lives* all the time by the way you live your own lives; and in the end I suppose that changed lives make changed opinions; but let me warn you again, please, in all courtesy, that neither my life nor my opinions will ever be changed by argument."

"But I didn't come here to argue," said Mr. Freyer feebly. "I came because — because —"

"Because you wished to give me a pleasant thought to carry away on my journey," said Jean, very sweetly, holding out her hand to him, "and I shall think very happily, if you will allow me, that I have left behind me a good friend in Mr. Freyer; and now I am so glad to have this chance of talking with you about Mary's music." She withdrew her hand again and entered into an eminently practical discussion of piano method and voice culture, wherein Mr. Frever found himself taking part apparently without volition. When at last he bethought himself that it was high time for him to be riding back to the College, he tried to infuse into his farewell some of the intention with which his call had begun. But some power not his own, mysteriously prevented his appearing in relation to Miss Stuart like anything more interesting than an elderly friend and the father of a promising pupil.

"However," thought Mr. Freyer, as he betook himself to the College, "it is perhaps fortunate that I did not commit myself even to a conditional proposition; for it is evident from all she said that she is not yet in a frame of mind to embrace the essential doctrines. And for a missionary's wife—" Mr. Freyer shook his head sadly. Then there returned to his mind the picture of Jean holding out her hand and calling him friend; and the heart of the little man gave a thump which his conscience made haste to rebuke.

"If she will not believe," said Conscience to Heart, "she is the enemy to your soul; and you have no right to love her." But Heart, even in the little preacher, got the last word. "Even so," said Heart, valiantly, "we are commanded to love our enemies."

And then perhaps it was Mind that added sotto voce, "But really, it is very strange, that with all my efforts, I could not seem to tell her so."

CHAPTER XXX

AMONG THE PROPHETS

By four o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, March and, the Lawrence household was astir; and it was not yet six o'clock when a party on horseback left the gate of the city Compound. Miss Stuart was attended by her own hostler; Dan Lawrence had with him his faithful servant. Hilgar; and Mr. John Prescott was riding out with them to meet his son and "pour him on the road" as the Persian idiom has it. Roger Standish would have been glad to go as far as Mr. Prescott: but when in the course of his farewell call he mentioned this desire to Miss Stuart, the discouragement he received was both decided and unflattering. The boy went to bed thanking his stars that there was at least one girl in the Mission whose hair was not red; and he woke up in the morning just long enough to turn over in his warm bed with a feeling of comfortable resentment against the cavalcade which he heard riding out of the Compound.

They stopped at the College to pick up Dr. MacColl and her servant. Thorley Prescott, who met them on the road to the river, brought up the last reënforcements in the persons of the Kurdish Chief and two younger Kurds, one of whom was to act as cook and the other as commissary. Three mules, carrying tents, bedding, cooking utensils, and food, were driven along by the servants. As Miss Stuart heard the cries of the mule-drivers and looked back at the caravan, she thought it rather an important escort. For, owing to the wildness of the country into which they

were going, it had been thought best that the party should be large enough to command respect.

Jean Stuart was glad of something to attract her outward attention; for, to her great disgust, she found herself not in possession of her usual inner poise. In fact, it had made her very angry that her heart began beating ever so much faster the minute she caught sight of Thorley Prescott riding toward her on the Fiend. And when he had come up to shake hands with her, she had pretended that Lord Chesterton would not stand still long enough.

"Chesty as ever, isn't he?" said Thorley, eying the horse and his rider with an approbation which he did not try to hide. He had made up his mind that since he had been obliged to take this journey, he would enjoy it to the full, not allowing his pleasure to be marred by thoughts of the future. There could be no evil results, he had concluded, except a little additional suffering which he was strong enough, surely, to bear without wincing. And now his heart beat high at the sight of Tean Stuart and at the knowledge that she would be near him day and night for two long, glorious weeks. She, however, made an excuse to send him away for a moment; and when he came back, she was riding between Dan Lawrence and Dr. MacColl. Her anger at herself had abated as soon as she heard the perfectly natural tone in which she answered Thorley's greeting. Perhaps, also, the homage of his eyes had helped to appease her mortification. But she had no intention of letting him think that the place at her right hand was one to be easily secured. She wondered for an instant whether it could be disappointment that she felt when he fell behind very cheerfully to ride with his father; and she made haste to conclude that it could not be anything so foolish.

Dan Lawrence was speaking. "I suppose the country through which we are to pass, looks about as it did in the days of Xenophon, and I doubt whether its inhabitants have progressed very much since then. Some few of them cling to a form of nominal Christianity, others think they are Moslems; but there are a good many of the old fire-worshippers and plenty of tribes that can't be called anything but Pagans. As for civilization, they live exactly as their forefathers did in the days — I was going to say — of Noah! I can't see that they have made any changes in their ways of dressing, eating, tenting, tilling the soil, or fighting, except that now and then one of the chiefs has gotten hold of an old blunderbuss or flintlock. That man is a king, I assure you."

"It's hard to believe," said Jean Stuart, with a great show of interest, "that any part of the world can be so backward. Don't you suppose that some day there will be a great and sudden change?"

"In Persia, yes," said Dan, "but not very readily in the minds of these mountain races. Some day before so very many years have passed, Persia will come back into history. For many years now, she has been tacitly ignored while Russia has been working quietly to gain an overwhelming interest, and England has seen to it just as quietly that the overland route to India is not endangered. Germany, too, has her eye on building railroads; and little Belgium has more than one finger in the pie by means of the telegraph system which she controls. Some day it will be worth while for one or more of these nations to see that Persia wakes up; and some day the Persians themselves will wake up and want for themselves and their children the things that other nations have."

"We're helping them toward that day," said Dr. MacColl energetically, "just as fast as we can." She prodded her horse as if he were a Persian whom she was forcing into the van of progress.

"You!" said Jean Stuart. "I didn't know that you had any political aspirations."

"Not for ourselves," said Dan, quickly. "Don't mistake us in this. Only that when the time comes for the great change, we hope there will have been a leaven working among the people, giving some of them, at any rate, sane ideas of political freedom and its responsibilities, industrial freedom and its opportunities, freedom of the press and education; and I do believe," he added, "that a few, even of the men in power, will have some notion of the motives that make a man work for others rather than for himself."

"Your hopes are high," remarked Jean.

"Surely," answered Dan. "Could we have lived so happily in Persia all these years without hope?"

They stopped for lunch near a village whose inhabitants promptly gathered themselves in an eager and inconvenient ring around the foreigners. Word got about that one of the party was a Hakim; whereupon all sore eyes, mutilated limbs and other infirmities capable of display were immediately presented to public view. The sight of them made Jean Stuart sick. She turned away in disgust and walked to a little distance, while the doctor and Dan Lawrence got out their medicine cases and began to grapple as well as they could with the problems before them. Mr. John Prescott stayed a little while to help them; but it was necessary for him to leave soon in order to reach the city before nightfall.

After Thorley had seen his father started, he went over to Jean. She, wrapped in a fur-lined cloak, was sitting huddled up on a heap of saddle-bags. Her hostler was trying to keep the village children at a respectful distance; and she, in limited, but forcible Turkish, was urging him to his work. Jean was rather tired and rather cold and, it must be admitted, very cross.

"I thought we were going to escape Missions," she remarked, as Thorley came up, "for two entire weeks; and here," she pointed over her shoulder toward the outdoor dispensary, "we are at 'em again worse than ever."

"We?" said Thorley, seating himself, cross-legged on the ground at her feet. He looked quizzically at Jean and then at her hostler, who was laying about him rather vigorously with the flat of a frying-pan. "We'll have Dan Lawrence down on us in a minute, if we let that chap lamm those children."

In Turkish he commanded the hostler to stop, and in a mixture of languages he persuaded the children to sit down where they were, so that he might tell them a story.

"If you'll let me," he said to Jean, while the children were struggling for a place in the front rank, "I'll talk to them, and then they'll be glad enough to go away."

The story was told in Syriac; and the children listened with their mouths and eyes wide open. Thorley illustrated his remarks by means of certain treasures which he took from his pockets. When he had finished speaking, the treasures were awarded to the best listeners; after which he sent the children away, and they retreated to long-range staring distance.

"I didn't know you could do that sort of thing," said Jean. "I suppose you told them a Bible story."

Thorley threw his head back and treated himself to a good long look at her. "I believe you're cross," he remarked with great relish. "It's the first time I've ever seen you so. Tell me, has the winter played the mischief with your temper?"

"You certainly have not helped to make it less dull for me." Jean could have bitten her tongue out the moment the words were said.

Thorley wagged his head in an abandon of mischievous glee. "I bet it's been dull," he assented.

"Aren't you sorry?" asked Jean, recovering a fragment of her temper.

"Awfully!" declared Thorley. "But I can't see that the dullness has impaired your health or —" He was look-

ing at her very eloquently all the time, but here he stopped.

"Or what?" she demanded.

"Look here," he said suddenly, "you're cold. Get on your horse, and we'll take a gallop." He put out his hand to help her up, and noticed with compunction that she was almost too stiff to stand.

"Jean," cried Dr. MacColl, "come over here and help me a minute."

"Please go and find out what she wants," said Jean to Thorley. "I can't look at those sick people."

"She wants you to hold a girl's head while she attends to an abscess under her eye."

"Can't Mr. Lawrence —" began Jean.

"The girl is a Moslem and they won't let him come near her."

"Oh --"

"Come on. It's all right. I told Dr. MacColl you were going to ride with me; and she thinks it's all my fault."

"Will it help the girl much?"

"Why, yes. Doctor thinks it may save the eye, if she can make them understand about keeping the bandage wet with antiseptic."

"And she wants me to hold the girl?"

"Yes; but I guess she'll manage without you. The mother looks as if she had a little sense."

Jean Stuart walked quickly over to Dr. MacColl. "Here I am, Doctor," she said. "Where do you want me?"

"Oh, yes, Jean," said the doctor, swiftly bandaging a sore that had been running for over a year, "that's the girl over there in the green headdress. Get her to lie down on that rubber blanket behind the tent-cloth and see that her face is moderately clean near the abscess — but don't touch that. Dan will give you a damp cloth,"

"Heaven help me!" thought Jean; and she went meekly to work.

"There!" exclaimed the doctor half an hour later, "that's the last case we can possibly do, if we are to reach Bagharan before dark. Well, I believe we've cleaned up everything we could really help in one treatment. The man with cataract and the woman with hip disease must go to the hospital; and I think their friends will take them. It's been a pretty good job for a snap shot. And you, Jean Stuart, are a very capable assistant. I shall have use for you again."

"Not if I can help it," muttered Jean, hunting desperately for a place where she might be alone. She was missing when the rest of the party were ready to mount; and though she turned up in answer to vigorous shouting, her face was still very white. Dan Lawrence gave her a shrewd look as he helped her into the saddle.

"Do you want us to wait until you feel better?" he asked her under cover of tightening her girths.

"No, thank you," she answered, "it's nothing."

"I know," he smiled sympathetically at her. "I suffered that kind of nothing myself a good many times when I first came back here. Let me know if you want to stop at any time."

But Thorley Prescott nosed the Fiend resolutely into the place beside Lord Chesterton. "Now you may say we, if you like," he conceded in a tone that brought the color tingling back into her cheeks. "I myself went so far as to tie up the stump of a finger."

"That's nothing to telling a Bible story," she retorted. "I haven't yet come to that."

"No, but you will," he prophesied. "I expect to see the day when you'll find it as hard to swear off from missionary work as Dan himself."

"If ever I am a missionary," she retorted, "I'll be that kind."

"You'd better be," he answered. "It's the only kind that's any good," but he said it without a touch of his old bitterness; and Dan, riding just ahead of him, thanked God and took courage at the new ring in the voice of his friend.

CHAPTER XXXI

EXPLANATIONS ASKED

THE next day the party turned the corner of Lake Muramna, and proceeding southward along the western shore, entered a region where the villages were few and far between. They travelled at a good speed because Dan Lawrence wished to reach Suj Anak before Sunday, that he might hold a preaching service in the old Nestorian Church. He had offered to push on by himself, leaving his companions to proceed in a more leisurely way. He thought it too much to ask of Miss Stuart that she should rise at four in the bitter cold of an early spring morning and ride until dark with only two pauses: a miserly one for lunch, and another shorter one for afternoon tea. But Jean insisted that she was perfectly able to do as the others did and that she preferred Mr. Lawrence's companionship above even the bliss of an extra hour's morning sleep.

"And the faster we travel," said Thorley Prescott, "the fewer hospitals we can set up by the way."

Jean had hard work pretending not to hear him. It was uncanny to ride along hour after hour beside a man who could so often read her thoughts. "Perhaps other people have read them," she told herself, "but no one has ever had the cheek to report them to me. I wonder how he would like it, if I told him in so many words what he is thinking!"

For the predominant thoughts of the younger Prescott on this journey were by no means hidden from his companions. If Dr. MacColl found reason for confiding to Dan Lawrence that "it was a clear case on one side, at least," it may be presumed that Jean Stuart herself had an inkling of Thorley Prescott's feeling for her, a feeling which he flattered himself would remain forever unexpressed.

A man who never consulted a mirror except while shaving, was not likely to have a notion of the tales his eyes were telling whenever they rested on Jean Stuart's face. Nor was it strange, perhaps, that when he spoke to her, he was not listening to the tones of his own voice. He thought it only right to offer her a number of little services which he had never dreamed of doing for any one else, and he was likely to make an open fuss if Dan persisted in taking the place at her side, which he had marked for his own. If he had been told that every member of the party down to the most stupid of the donkey-boys was well acquainted with his plight, his first thought would have been to blame his father for telling them.

But Jean did not divine this ostrich-like attitude on the part of her lover. She supposed that he was reckless of appearances because he intended to win her and did not care who knew it. In the first few days of the journey, she had laughed up her sleeve more than once over his consummate audacity. She remembered that his behavior about Christmas time had caused her to wonder then whether he were getting ready to fall in love with her. It seemed strange now that he should have kept away from her so carefully all winter. For she could not doubt that something more than accident had thrown them so often together and then kept them so suddenly and so completely apart. She supposed he must have judged it useless to ask her to share his life as a missionary. And she knew he would not break his promise to his mother, even for her. The only conclusion she could draw was that his renewed association with her had been too much for his common sense and that he was now expecting the miracle of his love to change her, Jean Stuart of New York and Bar Harbor, into a Persia missionary.

The impulse however which had made her so ready to save the feelings of Mr. Freyer when he was bent on the same kind of folly, was lacking in the case of Thorley Prescott. She knew in the first place that if Thorley had made up his mind to declare his love, nothing she could do would have power to stop him. She did not perhaps admit that she really preferred not to stop him, but she did catch herself looking forward now and then with a sort of fearful relish to the moment when she should get a chance to baffle him by means of a plump and flat-footed NO.

In the meantime she gave herself up moment by moment to a keen enjoyment of the situation. Here she was, on her favorite horse, riding all day long in an atmosphere so clear and pure that it intoxicated her. Wherever she looked, her eye rested on scenes of rugged beauty; and of her three travelling companions, every one was peculiarly congenial to her. All this was quite enough, considering the tedium she had just been enduring, to account for an exhilaration of spirits which made the long days of riding almost too short. There was no reason to think that her enjoyment was due to the presence or to the attitude of any one person. So Jean Stuart assured herself more than once. And the very fact that she did so assure herself, might have given cause for anxiety to, let us say, her Aunt Cordelia.

Dan Lawrence saw no cause for anxiety. He was glad of what he saw, glad to the point of hugging himself as he rode along behind Jean and Thorley. So far this had been a very happy journey for Dan. He had left Margaret and the children well; he, too, enjoyed the change from the constraint of city life; and if only Margaret could have been with him, he would have liked nothing better than those long free days in the open air. There was a little of the Oriental in

Dan; he loved to fall into a long, quiet sequence of thought whose progress seemed to keep step with the strides of his horse. Among other interesting things, he had to think of his Sunday's sermon; for Dan never trusted to the inspiration before last, but coined every sermon new and shining from the industrious mint of his mind. Dr. MacColl, too, found her own pleasures in the expedition. Even the campfollowers added their share to the general feeling of harmony; for they did their work pretty well and quarrelled no more than was absolutely necessary.

So the party journeyed on until, rather late Saturday evening, they reached Suj Anak, and encamped in a field just outside the town. Here they were joyously received by the members of the native church, who constrained them to lodge in their houses. This hospitality would have been accepted by the missionaries except for the presence of Miss Stuart; but they agreed that they could not subject their guest to the hardship of two nights in a native house; so they found means of turning aside the eagerness of their would-be hosts.

Sunday morning the Americans all attended service at the old Nestorian Church. Dan preached and Thorley led the singing; while Jean Stuart alternately choked and gasped, having frequent recourse to the lump of camphor which she carried in her handkerchief. She had time however to notice Dan's expression as he spoke, and she resolved to ask him when she had a chance, what was the subject of his sermon. Dan felt it right to accept the dinner invitation of the resident pastor. So the four travellers sat down on the floor of the parsonage to dine with the men of the family, while the women waited on them, stepping across the cloth when convenient, with their bare feet.

Jean had hard work to keep up an appearance of eating; but the others made a hearty meal and pronounced the food unusually good.

All the afternoon they were surrounded by a mob of people. Some wanted to talk with the missionaries about religion; others wanted medicine and surgical aid, while many were simply curious about the foreigners. Thorley offered to take Jean for a walk, that she might get away from the sights and smells that were so distressing to her.

"No, thank you, Mr. Prescott," she answered, "Dr. MacColl has more work than she can do alone, and I have promised to help her."

He smiled at her so meaningly that her glance fell and she turned to leave him.

"Just a minute," he pleaded, "look me straight in the eye while I ask you one question. Who was it that sulked all Wednesday afternoon because she couldn't get rid of Missions?" He said the words over her shoulder for she would not face him again.

"I can't help it," she murmured, hastening away to join Dr. MacColl. "I hate it just as much as ever; but no mortal could keep from trying to help the poor creatures when they are in such misery."

"But when you get back to America, you'll never think of them again, eh?"

She wheeled on him suddenly. "There is a nickname," she declared, "that would suit you better than any other. I have always wanted to call you by it."

"What is it?"

"Do you really want to know?"

"Yes, I dare you to tell me."

"Well, it's Thorny. You've been a perfect thorn to me ever since I reached Muramna. I wish you would stop teasing me about Missions. I don't like them and I never will; and you don't like them one bit better than I do!"

Followed by the sound of a hearty laugh from her tormentor, she made her escape into the hospital tent, where she knelt on the ground all through the afternoon, washing sores and handing instruments, stanching the flow of blood, and applying antiseptic dressings.

It was not until after dark that the missionaries were free to sit down in the light of the camp-fire for their evening meal. When they had finished eating, they wrapped themselves in cloaks and drew near the fire for a Sunday evening chat.

"Now this is cosey," said Dr. MacColl, emerging from her cloak to indulge in the joy of poking the fire. "I'm just tired enough to like it and not quite as sleepy as I am on the days when we ride 'from morn till dewy eve."

"We needn't travel as fast now," said Thorley Prescott.

"The Sheikh says we are only two short farsangs from his home. That means that we reach it easily Tuesday afternoon."

"And then I shall be leaving you," said Dan Lawrence. "I wish you were going all the way with me."

Jean Stuart bethought herself of the question she had intended to ask about the morning sermon; but close to her side sat "Thorny" Prescott; and she refrained.

"Now, Jean Stuart," said the doctor briskly, "this is just the time for a hymn. You'll be singing us 'The Land o' the Leal' at the polite request of an old Scotch woman; and if he's in a pleasing frame of mind, Thorley Prescott will be humming an accompaniment."

"Miss Stuart, as you should know, is much too tired to sing," growled Thorley.

"And Mr. Prescott is in anything but a pleasing frame of mind," trilled Jean, "as-we-can-very-easily-see-for-our-selves." She lilted the last words right up into his face. The firelight shone on the witchery of her smile and kindled her hair into an aureole. Thorley rose hastily and strode away, muttering as he went, something about seeing to the horses.

"Now, Jean, you can sing," said Dr. MacColl.

"No, really, I am too tired; and besides I want to ask Mr. Lawrence about his sermon this morning. What were you saying?" she asked, turning to Dan. "You know I can't understand; but you looked so happy that I wondered what it was all about."

"I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness," Dan replied softly.

"And what does that mean?" asked Jean. "What do you see in 'His likeness' that you should desire it so?"

"The power to keep in touch with my Heavenly Father," answered Dan, "so that I may know that my work is all an expression of His will."

"What do you mean by keeping in touch?" asked Jean. "Is that prayer?"

"Prayer is one way of getting in touch with Him — the first way, I think — and perhaps the last way, too."

"And then," said Jean, "what else does 'His likeness' mean to you?"

"Peace," Dan replied. "The sense that I am forgiven because I have been strong enough to forgive."

"Anything else?" asked Jean.

"Much else," Dan smiled as he said the quiet words, "but perhaps it is all summed up in the one word Love. I want a love to shine through me that will have power to attract every soul I meet."

"To you?" asked Jean.

"To 'His likeness,'" Dan replied.

"Then religion means to you," said Jean, "power to

pray and forgive and love?"

"And give," added Dr. MacColl emphatically, "like Christ, and because of Him and for Him. Yes, that's a pretty good definition of Christianity; and Dan had it all in his sermon this morning. What's better still," she added under her breath to Jean, "he has it all in his life."

"But there isn't much of the supernatural about that," said Jean.

"Oh, isn't there?" answered a voice from behind the little circle of light. "Did you ever have anything to forgive? Is it a part of your nature to love those that despitefully use you? I must say it isn't in me."

Jean Stuart gave a great start as Thorley Prescott came striding into the light and stood looking down at the fire with his hands in his overcoat pockets.

"May I suggest," he added, "that the fire is going out?"

"And it's bedtime," assented Dr. MacColl, rising and shaking herself.

"Make a few allowances for me, old man," said Dan Lawrence. "I have only two more evenings to spend with you all."

Two days later the travellers arrived at the stronghold of the Kurdish Chief, and pitched their tents at the foot of his hill. Here Dan Lawrence said good-by to his friends on the morning of Wednesday, March the 9th.

Before he left, he took Thorley aside and warned him that Hilgar believed they had been followed for two or three days by a party of men, who kept far enough behind so that it was seldom possible to catch sight of them.

"Hilgar thinks," said Dan, "that the shortest of the men wears a green turban."

Thorley looked up with a gleam in his eye. "I never did believe that the little viper was dead."

"Well, be careful, old man," said Dan, with a hand on his friend's shoulder. "I believe that Hadji Husain is dead or I should never think of leaving you alone with the two ladies; but it may be that a band of robbers is waiting for a chance to waylay you. They won't touch you while the Sheikh is in your party. So you'd better let him escort you back at least as far as Suj Anak."

"I'll do that," said Thorley, thinking of Jean. "Are you taking a guide?"

"Yes, through this mountain pass. After that it's plain sailing. You can see the horizon for miles around. Well, I wish you were all going with me. It will be a lonely journey now."

Thorley and the two ladies climbed a little hill to watch Dan ride away. He turned as he entered the pass, to wave his hand at them, and shouted back a message that came clearly through the pure air.

"If you see Margaret first, give her my love." And with that he was lost to sight.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY

As soon as Dan had left, Dr. MacColl, escorted by Thorley Prescott, went up the hill to diagnose the case of the Kurdish Chief's wife. This was the woman whom the doctor had come so far to see. Prescott secretly provided that a strong guard of Kurds should watch over Jean Stuart whenever he was away; and she was commanded not to wander from the encampment.

Thorley had to go with the doctor because she did not understand this Kurdish dialect. They climbed up through a rocky defile which was guarded by a boy with a stone poised in his hand. Inside a high craggy wall was a collection of horse-hair tents, from one of which issued the groans of a dving woman. Dr. MacColl, a little breathless from climbing, quickened her pace, and disappeared promptly behind the flap. Thorley was permitted to stand just outside, where he could act as interpreter for the women within the tent and the men who were clustered outside. Dr. MacColl found a clear and beautiful case of the curious disease with which she had been grappling in the dark for many years. It had progressed so far in this case, that she could do little except to relieve the patient temporarily; but she felt that if she could watch the woman for a few days, she would be in a position to cure cases that were less advanced and to make a very interesting contribution to medical literature. spent the morning with her patient, returned to the camp for a hasty lunch, and went up the hill again for another

hour. She had the pleasure of leaving the Kurdish woman sleeping peacefully for the first time in several months. The tears ran down the iron cheeks of the Chief, as he listened to the quiet breathing of his wife and saw her face with the lines of pain smoothed away. He made his salaams humbly to the doctor and to Thorley Prescott, assuring them that anything he had was theirs.

Dr. MacColl went down the hill again well satisfied, and deluged Jean Stuart, who was writing letters in the door of their tent, with a flood of professional details that made Jean put both hands to her ears.

"Oh, gammon," said the doctor, good-naturedly, "you needn't pretend that you don't take a healthy human interest in all these things. You can't fool me! Your brain is as keen, your stomach as strong, and your heart as tender as mine or Thorley's; and to-morrow I'll take you up to see the case, though it won't be as interesting as it was to-day. Come on in and help me hunt a clean waist. I really think I must change, to celebrate my grand discovery."

The doctor stepped inside the tent and began unbuttoning her blouse, with a vigor that would have shaken to its very foundations any garment less powerfully constructed. (She always sewed her seams twice over on a lock-stitch machine; and the material her sister sent her from America never wore out. None of the other missionaries could get their sisters to find anything like it.)

Thorley detained Jean as she was following the doctor. "Please come for a walk with me," he said. "There's a hill near by, which we ought to explore."

"I'd like that," said Jean; "but please let me see first if I can do anything for the doctor."

"Just get your hat," urged Thorley; "she's perfectly able to change her own clothes. And she'll gibber eternally about her old disease if you stay."

Jean regarded him with a look that strove to seem more

mischievous than grateful. "You hedge your kindness very carefully with thorns," she said, "but it peeps through sometimes, in spite of you."

His eyes told her for the thousand and first time all that he had resolved not to say with his lips. They remarked dryly, -

"That wasn't the way you put it last Sunday."
"No," she admitted, "I'm afraid I was pretty cross. Let me own now once for all, that there are moments when I don't feel your thorns at all."

"Call me Thorny once in a while," he begged, "and I'll forgive you anything - Jean."

She gave him a look as she vanished into the tent, a look that made him pace savagely up and down, grinding his teeth together.

"That was going pretty near the edge," he told himself. "I have no right to the delight of calling her Jean."

Presently he began to get terribly impatient because Jean failed to return, and he strode fiercely up to the tent with the intention of letting her know how he felt.

Dr. MacColl, in her clean blouse, emerged from the flap just as he came up.

"Isn't she coming?" he demanded.

"Don't ever make me jump like that again," snapped the doctor. "It might get my hand to trembling."

"Well, is she coming?" pursued Thorley in a slightly gentler voice.

"No doubt she has heard your question; and if she chooses, she will answer it herself. You'll have to learn a little patience, my boy," and the doctor, marching away to boil her instruments, picked her steps carefully; for the sun was hot in this valley, and the ground was very soft.

Thorley paced up and down for several minutes longer before Jean came out, the only apparent change in her dress being a soft felt hat which was pulled down over her hair in a way that Thorley much resented. Jean expected his greeting to be anything but suave. She was almost disappointed when he humbly remarked that it was good of her to come and he hoped she was wearing rubbers. Being assured that she was, he silently led the way toward his hill.

The hill proved a most delightful place. They climbed it by means of a goat-path which brought them up a gentle slope to a level niche about half-way to the summit. flat place was large enough for a camping-ground and was protected by rocky walls from the north and east winds. At this time of day it was flooded with sunshine. A wide view of mountain and valley spread to the west where Thorley pointed out to Jean the white peaks of ranges in Turkey, which Dan would have to pass before he reached his destination. To the south lay a country rolling and fertile, dotted here and there with Kurdish encampments; and by stepping out on a ledge of rock to the east, they could peep around the side of the hill and just catch a glimpse of Lake Muramna sparkling in the sun. At their feet the earliest spring flowers were pricking their heads above the ground. Iean, catching sight of them, ran in wild delight from one to the other, caressing each of the dear little things before she picked it, and making up pet names for the kinds she did not know. Between flowers, she stopped to feast her eves on the view: near-by mountains looming up steep and rugged. their bases black with the shadows of mighty rocks, their tops covered with a dazzling crust of snow that was beginning to glow already in anticipation of the sunset, distant mountains of the deepest purple so far away that they looked translucent as amethyst, their glistening peaks transfigured into a glorious lilac, over all, the exquisite blue of a cloudless sky and the gorgeous gold of the Persian sunshine.

Jean Stuart drank in the air and the glory and forgot to wonder why she felt so happy. Thorley Prescott drank in glory, too, and almost forgot that it was not for him. For a long time they scarcely spoke. Jean made little inarticulate noises to the flowers she gathered, blowing into their faces to make them bloom. Thorley thought dead flowers would have come to life with such a spirit breathing on them. At last Jean sat down suddenly where the view was most beautiful and, dropping her flowers into her lap, began to make a bouquet. Thorley strode quickly over to her, holding out his hand.

"You mustn't sit there," he said.

"Why not?" said Jean, ignoring his hand and sorting her flowers with great care.

"It's wet. The springs are just behind you." He took the hand that held the incipient bouquet and, pulling gently, tried to make her rise.

Jean left her hand placidly in his but kept her seat, though with some effort. "Please leave me alone," she said, smiling up at him. "I'm very comfortable here in spite of the springs, and I'll lose all these flowers if I try to get up."

"I'll help you gather them again," said Thorley, getting possession of the other hand and giving a real pull which brought her to her feet in spite of all she could do. The flowers, of course, fell to the ground; and Thorley went premptly on his knees to pick them up.

Jean Stuart felt like anything but a lady as she stood looking down at his broad back. She wanted to do as she would have done when she was ten years old, she wanted to pummel and scratch and revile. In short, she did *not* want to "let the ape and tiger die." But she mastered herself and walked quietly away, climbing around the ledge of rock whence Thorley had shown her Lake Muramna.

As she went out on the ledge, she saw that farther on, there was a narrower shelf from which the rock dropped away in a precipice. Even where she was standing, the descent was steep enough to give her a dizzy feeling; but a foolish idea came into her head that if she should go farther out on the

shelf, she would be hidden by the curve of the hill and Thorley Prescott, when he had finished picking up every one of those flowers, would be startled at not finding her within sight. She glanced back and saw him still bending conscientiously over the spot where she had been sitting; and the desire of punishing him tempted her greatly. But when she had looked again at the narrowness of the shelf and the depth of the precipice, she put the childish impulse aside, turning impatiently back to join the man who, having forced from her a primeval obedience, deserved the primeval punishment that she was too civilized to give him. With the hasty movement her foot slipped; she felt it going out from under her; she felt herself falling and sliding, sliding, faster and faster toward the edge of the rock.

"Thor," she cried, "save me!" And she gripped the surface of the rock desperately with her hands and nails.

Thorley reached her almost before the cry was out of her mouth. He lifted her in his arms and carried her like a child back to safety. Then he held her while he took off his coat and placed it for her to lie on. In the meantime he was speaking; and Jean Stuart kept her eyes closed that she might not interrupt the sweetness of those words. But when he had laid her down on the coat and was bending over her in silence, she opened her eyes, smiling, and asked for water.

He hastened to fill his drinking-cup from the springs that had caused their disagreement. She propped herself against the wall of rock and drank all he brought her and, when he offered to get more, she let him. As he stooped to the springs the second time, she saw him pick up the compact bunch of flowers he had been collecting and crowd it into his pocket.

She, leaning against the rock, drank the second cup of water very slowly, and as he stood silent, looking down at her, she went over the words he had spoken while her eyes

were closed, rejoiced at them, wondered why she should rejoice, and wondered most of all why he had stopped when he If he had gone on to say anything that asked for an answer, it might have been hard for her to give it. No was an ugly word to throw at a man who had just saved one's life: and of course it would be entirely out of the question to tell him "Yes"; and yet - and yet - she believed she rather wished he would go on. From the way he had already spoken, she knew there was plenty more that he would like So she reflected, drinking the water slowly and feeling his eyes always on her. At last she looked up to hand him the cup and to see for herself why he hesitated. And when she saw his face, she began all over again to wonder, but this time without joy. Stern and strong were his eyes, firm and sad his mouth. His face was drawn and grav and his left hand was clenched, so that the knuckles were white against his brown skin and the veins stood out big and black. Jean Stuart had never seen a man looking like that, and she was so frightened that she started to her feet.

Instantly his face changed to the expression she was learning to claim as her own. Quickly he put out his hands and steadied her, kneeling as he helped her lean back against the rock, and saving in his gentlest tone:—

"What is it, Jean? What is it, little girl? Has anything frightened you?"

Jean hid her face against the rock and shuddered. In that moment there came to her a knowledge which she would have gone far to escape. Thorley sat down beside her, so near that she could feel his breath against her neck and the warmth of his presence through every part of her. Every instinct implored her to throw herself into his arms, to lay her head on his shoulder till comfort should come to her, and then to lift her face and comfort him with her lips and her heart and her whole life.

Yet she continued to shrink away from him against the

rock; and he, feeling that she shrank, rose and, walking to a little distance, stood looking off across the valley to the mountains of Turkey. There was anguish in his heart. Bitterly he blamed himself for the past, wildly he raged against the temptation of the moment, hopelessly he turned his face away from the future. And Jean, watching his motionless back, wondered more and more and fought against confessing that the sympathy she felt for him was a good half disappointment.

The frankness of her thoughts became at last so irritating that she rose impatiently and went toward Thorley, preening herself a little as she went, smoothing her plumage like a bird that has come to the edge of the nest and poises itself to fly blithely away. By the time she had reached Thorley's side, she was herself again, friendly and helpful and full of common sense.

"Come, Mr. Prescott," she said, as if their chief concern had always been the view from this particular place, "the view is too lovely to leave. I suggest that we move our tents to-morrow to this very spot and stay here as long as we can. But now it is almost sunset; and Dr. MacColl will be wondering where we are."

With the last words, she started quietly down the path. He was beside her in a moment, seizing her almost roughly by the arm.

"Can't you wait for me to help you?" he cried. "Do you want to kill yourself — and me?"

"Hush, hush," she said, "the path isn't steep a bit; and I feel quite well again; but I'll take your arm, if you like."

He groaned aloud and planting himself before her in the path, put his hands behind him so that his arms pressed tightly against his sides. His face, as he looked up at her, was knotted with grief.

"Oh," he said, "can't you see that this is killing me?"

Jean wondered dully that she was not afraid of him; for

he brought the words out desperately, glaring as if he hated her. But she moved a little toward him, saying gently:—

"What is killing you, Thorny?"

"My God!" he cried, "she calls me 'Thorny." And he turned his back on her.

Jean Stuart sat down quietly in the path and waited. Indeed she had to sit down; for she was trembling. It seemed an eternity that she sat there, looking at Thorley's back. At last he faced her; and though his lips quivered, his eyes were calm with the acceptance of a great sorrow and disgrace. He held out to her the knotted end of his handkerchief.

"If you'll take hold of this," he said, "I can help you." And, seeing her look of astonishment, he added, "If I should touch your hand again—" The rest was choked by a dry sob as he turned to lead her down the hill.

CHAPTER XXXIII

BLOW ON BLOW

That night Jean Stuart found it difficult to sleep. Hour after hour she lay puzzling over the events of the afternoon, and scourging herself that it could make any difference to her whether or not a man got up his courage to make a proposal of marriage.

"I couldn't dream of marrying him, anyway," she told herself for the hundredth time as she strove to shut out the remembrance of Thorley Prescott's face by arranging her air pillow so that it would not cramp her neck. To sleep with only a slumber-bag between you and the hard, cold ground is all very well; but if you are obliged to lie awake, you are advised to provide yourself at least with a cot and with one that does not squeak!

After she had twisted herself around for several hours inside her bag, Jean Stuart was cold as well as angry; but her mind was still persistently haunted by the face of Thorley Prescott as she had seen it that day on the hill. When she opened her eyes, she could see that face gazing at her through the inky darkness and when she closed them, she could see it still, imperious, alarmed, tender, rapturous, stern, compassionate, terrible, or appealing. As she had seen it in the daylight, so she was condemned to see it all night long; for when at last she did fall asleep, the face still looked at her; and she began to flee from it over hill and valley.

Through range after range of mountains, her sleeping

R

spirit wandered. She hid beneath overhanging crags, she perched on the slippery pinnacles of the highest peaks, she fell more than once from a precipice; but everywhere she was met by that from which she was fleeing: the face of Thorley Prescott and the sense of his suffering. Then, after she had thrown herself from an inconceivable height, and was falling for ages through the dark, suddenly she lost the sense of his presence and passed from the terror of headlong flight into a loneliness that was even more awful. Desperately she started out again, groping, slipping, panting, through the dark in search of that companionship which she had done her best to escape. And suddenly there was a great light; and she had found his face, shining, glorious, as she had never yet seen it; and she awoke with a cry to discover that, through a hole in the tent, the sun was shining straight into her eyes. Knowing that she had cried out, she feared lest Dr. MacColl had been disturbed; but that lady giving every sign of being still in the deepest slumber, Jean felt at liberty to dress very quietly, and escape from the tent.

The air and the sunshine had never felt so good as they did now, after the horrors of the night. Jean shook herself as she walked away to the hillock whence, only the morning before, they had watched the departure of Dan Lawrence.

"It seems a good deal longer than that; and yet nothing has happened of any account."

Whereupon she reached the top of the hillock and started violently, as she saw that just under the rock on which she stood, there sat a man with his face hidden in his hands.

"Oh," said Jean Stuart, before she could stop herself.
And, "Oh!" said the man, starting to his feet. "Are

And, "Oh!" said the man, starting to his feet. "Are you here?"

"Yes," faltered Jean, "I could — I — that is — the sun woke me up; and I came out to see what kind of morning it is."

"Will you sit down?" asked Thorley Prescott, taking off his coat and laying it on the rock where he had been sitting.

"Not on your coat," she answered. "It's cold, and you need it yourself. Besides, I don't care to sit down."

Without a word Thorley put on his coat and waited with his eyes on Jean's face to see what her wishes were. She put up her hand, ostensibly to shade her eyes, which, as her back was to the east, looked rather foolish. The sun was shining full on Thorley's face, and his expression was for the moment the very one she had seen just before she woke. Then she had cried out at the sight of it; now she did not know what to do and, being unstrung after her broken night, she blurted out:—

"I wish you wouldn't stand there looking at me. Can't you say something?"

As he lowered his eyes, the radiance passed from his face, leaving it weary and gray.

Jean Stuart stamped her foot. "Can't you speak?" she demanded. Then she collected herself. "I'm tired of darkness and night," she declared with a light laugh, "and I look to you for a little pleasant human chatter."

Thorley smiled grimly. "You've come to the wrong person," was all he answered.

Then, with a sudden determination, he stepped up and offered his hand to help her down from the rock. "Please come down here beside me just a minute," he pleaded. "I want to tell you something. Perhaps it will help me to be steadfast if you understand."

She waved him aside. "You can tell me from below. I like this rock and I mean to stay on it. As nearly as I can make out, you are steadfast enough without any help from me."

"But you don't know," he cried in astonishment, "it isn't possible that my Father has told you?"

"I know nothing about you except what you told me

yourself at Akbar. I know that you think you must stay in Persia forever."

He almost laughed at the jolt of meeting with so different a train of thought. "It's not that at all," he spoke more and more slowly. "It's just that I want you to know that I'm engaged to be married."

Jean Stuart's long social training came to her aid. "Let me congratulate you," she said smoothly, holding out her hand.

He took it with a look which she never forgot.

"And now," she went on, "I begin to feel as if a little breakfast would be acceptable; and while we are walking back, you will tell me all about the young lady and why you have kept your friends in ignorance of your blissful condition." If there was a breath of irony in the last words, it was inaudible.

As she turned to leave the hillock, her eye mechanically swept the western horizon.

"Oh, see, Mr. Prescott," she exclaimed in a very different tone, "who are those men and what are they bringing?"

Thorley wheeled to look where she was pointing. He gazed for several long seconds before he spoke. "Go back to the camp," he commanded. "Wake up Dr. MacColl and stay in your tent, both of you, till I, myself, tell you to come out."

"But what is it?" asked Jean. "Who is it?"

"Do as I tell you," he thundered, "and run."

He waited to see her start before he advanced in the other direction.

Jean found Dr. MacColl almost dressed and inclined to make light of her news and Thorley's commands.

"It's a couple of patients, of course," she declared. "They're being brought on litters because they can't walk; and they've come before the sun is up. Very sensible, I'm

sure." At this point the doctor essayed to leave the tent; but Jean laid hold of her skirt and prevented her.

"Mr. Prescott said we were both to stay here until he came."

The doctor muttered something about a boy and an idiot; but she stayed in the tent. As for Jean, she began packing her saddle-bags; and after watching her a moment, the doctor turned white to the lips and followed her example.

"You know more, young lady, than you will tell me," she murmured, as she tied up her bottle of tooth-wash in one of

her woollen bed-socks.

It seemed an eternity to both the women before they heard outside the tent the voice of Thorley Prescott.

"Both of you please come out," he said. They opened the tent and went out trembling.

"You'd better sit down," he said, "before I tell you."

"We know," answered Dr. MacColl. "It's Dan," she sobbed as she said it. "Is he dead?"

"Yes, he and Hilgar. The Kurds have brought their bodies."

"Is there no life in them?" The doctor made a motion to go and see for herself; but Thorley detained her.

"No, no; they must have been lying dead for hours before they were found."

"The Kurds were not with them at the time?"

"No, they had left Dan at the end of the pass and had gone for a hunt in the hills. It was when they were returning towards evening that they came on traces of a fight, which they followed until they found —" His voice broke. He cleared his throat and went on huskily. "They did what they could and came back as quickly as possible. But it was too dark to come through the pass, so burdened. And now —"

"We must make ready to start at once," said the doctor.

"Oh," cried Thorley Prescott, "if only it could have been I."

Jean Stuart leaning against the tent-pole had not spoken. Now she came up to Thorley and laying her hand on his arm, asked in a terrified voice, "Who did it?"

"I don't know," said Prescott; but his eyes fell before hers; and she reading his horror from her own, knew that he lied.

"They told me the Hadji was dead," she cried.

"He is dead," snapped Dr. MacColl. "Come, come, there's no time to waste."

"Is he?" persisted Jean, her hand still on Thorley's arm, her eyes still searching his. "Is he dead, or is this the revenge he has taken on us? Tell me the truth, Thorley Prescott, and let me bear it with you."

Without one word, Thorley's look answered her as fully as if he had shown her the paper the Kurds had found, blood-stained and pierced by a poiniard, and bearing on it just two words —

BRESCOTT NEXT

And now, mercifully, they had no more time to think of themselves. The bodies had first of all to be prepared by every artifice of loving ingenuity for the inevitable roughness of the journey. The camp had to be broken; and a little food must if possible be swallowed by aching throats.

The Kurdish Chief, informed already by the men who had brought the bodies, was most kind with his offers of horses and men, and insisted on escorting the party himself every step of the way to Muramna. His wife had slept all night; and he could not do enough to show his gratitude. Dr. MacColl found a moment while the mules were being loaded, to rush up the hill and say good-by to her patient. She left medicines and directions, and was glad to know that one poor woman at least, had profited a little by this costly journey.

And then the long ride began. The long, pitiless miles dragged themselves on, one by one. Morning turned to noon and noon to evening and evening passed quickly into night. And tents had to be set up and food had to be eaten and a few hours had to be wasted (as it seemed) in rest; for there was no moon, and they could not have travelled in the inky blackness, even if their endurance could have held out.

From Suj Anak, which they reached the next day, they were able to send a telegram to Dr. Franklin. Here Thorley would have left the ladies, to spare them the cruel haste of the journey; but they were so distressed at the idea and promised so piteously not to hinder him in any way that he had to give it up. Indeed he was only too glad to have them with him and told them so with an emphasis that made them gasp. And so far from being a hindrance, they were always the first to be ready in the morning and the last to favor giving up the trail at night.

Saturday they were met by friends from Muramna, who had ridden out on receiving the news by telegraph. John Prescott came and George Whiting and the father and brother of Hilgar and two of the native pastors, as well as a delegation of Thorley's men from Akbar. Dr. Lawrence had tried to come; but at the last moment his strength left him and he had to be lifted from his horse. Dr. Franklin stayed behind to do what he could for all the Lawrences. And Mr. Freyer was helping the ladies to make everything ready for the funeral.

It seemed best for some of the party to take the freshest of the horses and push on as fast as they could to the city. The others would follow more slowly, but all would hope to reach home before Sunday was over. There were those who would have relieved Thorley of the precious burden that had been his through these days; but he would not have it so, though his going with the advance guard meant that he must leave Jean Stuart to the escort of others. She watched

him ride away, haggard, unshaven, and bowed down with his sorrow; and it seemed as if her heart were breaking with the fear that he next would be the victim of her recklessness.

So Jean Stuart returned to Muramna; and when they reached the College, she besought Dr. MacColl to let her stay in the rooms at the Hospital, that her presence at the Lawrences' might not be an added bitterness for those whom she had helped to bereave.

"I don't know how they will bear it ever to see me again," she sobbed; for at last Jean Stuart had broken down after the long strain. "They will all hate me forever."

Dr. MacColl gently stroked the bright head that lay on her knee. "You'll be very much surprised, dearie, when you do see Margaret Lawrence. There isn't anything in her heart for you but love and pity."

Jean lifted her face swiftly. "How do you know?" she cried. "That can't be! She hasn't said so?"

"No, dear. Not yet; but she will."

"I wouldn't," she declared, "not if it were my husband."

Dr. MacColl smiled very sadly. "Do you remember Dan's sermon," she said, "that last Sunday night? 'The power to pray and to forgive and to love'? You forget that Margaret has all that to help her."

"It won't help her to endure me," Jean persisted. "Nothing will."

Now the door opened quietly and Mrs. Franklin came into the room.

"Jean Stuart," she said, "is she here? Oh, yes. I have a message for you, dear girl. Margaret Lawrence has just called me up on the telephone. Word has reached her in the city, of your arrival. She sends you her dear love and is glad you are staying here for a good night's rest. She begs you to sleep if you can; and she asks that if you are able in the morning, you will come home rather early and help her with a few last things before the funeral."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THAT BITTER DAY

EVEN the best friends of Dan Lawrence were surprised at the overwhelming tokens of grief at his death. Men of all classes in the city gathered to do him honor; and from the whole Plain of Muramna, the villagers assembled with stories of what the Kasha Saib had done for them. The mourning for him was hearty and sincere; but the native friends followed the example of Dan's family and colleagues, restraining the expression of their sorrow with a self-control which was the finest tribute that could have been paid to the influence on them of Dan's own character.

The missionaries held first a little service in English just for themselves. Then a Syriac service took place in the large hall of the College, a service which was for Hilgar, the Nestorian servant, as well as for Dan Lawrence. After that, loving hands and strong shoulders bore the two away to their final resting-place on the mountain side at Akbar. For the missionaries had offered to bury Hilgar with Dan; and Hilgar's family thought it a great honor that the place of the servant should still be at the side of his master.

Jean Stuart did not go to Akbar with the others. At the last moment little Ruth was taken sick; and Jean begged permission to stay with her. Long before the return from Akbar, Ruth was able to be taken back to the city; so Jean, after making the child comfortable on the sofa, busied herself in giving the sitting-room a cheerful air, and in seeing that the supper was as appetizing as possible. In this way

she hoped to dull a little the poignancy of her own feelings. Indeed, she had suffered that day, until it seemed to her she could not suffer any more. The sight of Margaret's calmness, of the children's tear-stained faces, of old Dr. Lawrence staggering under the blow but kind and gentle in the words he spoke even about the murderers, all these pierced her to the heart. Then, too, she had been greatly touched by the multitude of dark faces, which she had seen at the College service. All of them were sorrowful; many of them were ravaged by grief; and some showed an understanding of the spirit in the services, which Jean could not claim for herself.

One group of faces only, bore evidence of that same fierce resentment and desire for revenge, which she felt. These were the Kurds who had been her travelling companions. The Sheikh had already told Thorley Prescott that he meant to track Hadji Husain and kill him without giving him a chance to slip through the meshes of the Persian law. Of this intention, Jean did not then know definitely; but she read the Chief's feeling in his burning eyes, and discerned in him and his men a spirit that matched her own.

It surprised her very much not to find a like sympathy with Thorley Prescott. His feelings at the beginning of the homeward journey had been, as she well knew, vindictive enough; but now all his rage seemed to have died away, leaving only a profound sorrow, a deep contrition, and a great longing to be of use. And he had been of the very greatest use. It was he who had seen that the Boys' Choir (trained by Margaret Lawrence) should be ready to sing Dan's favorite hymns. It was he who arranged with the men at the Treasury and the Printing-house that Dan should be carried all the way to Akbar so that the casket might not be seen jolting about, in the rude wagon that was all they could command for a hearse. It was on his arm that Dr. Lawrence leaned as they stood at the grave. It was he who drove the Lawrence buckboard all the long way back

to the city because the horses were restless from standing and wanted to run home. And it was he who followed the Lawrences into their house to ask what he could do for them that night.

"I shall sleep in the room just beyond the gangway," he said. "Be sure you let me know if there is anything before morning."

Then he went over to Jean, saying that he had been afraid she was ill when he had not seen her at Akbar.

"No, it was Ruth," Jean answered, "but she is better."

The others had left the room to put away their outdoor garments; so Jean added hurriedly:—

"What is to be done about the Hadji? Are they taking measures to get him?"

"The Governor seems really stirred up," said Thorley. "Our minister at Teheran has telegraphed him; and the British Consul may come from Tabriz. They won't catch the Hadji because he is in Turkey by this time; but they'll make him understand that it isn't safe to come back."

"Are you satisfied with that?" said Jean, scornfully. "Wouldn't you like to see him dead, to kill him with your own hands if necessary? Will you let your friend's death go unavenged?"

He looked at her steadily, sadly. "You don't understand, Jean," he said in a tone that somehow reminded her of Dan, "we men must protect the women and children and each other. We must have the murderer punished for a warning if we can. But in Dan's name, for our own sakes, and for the sake of the people, you and I and all of us must forgive as we have been forgiven." His voice sank with the last words and the big tears gathered in his eyes as he added, "I didn't see that to begin with; but since I came back, my friends have taught me. Have you heard anyone reproaching me? Yet I was the cause of it all; and even Mrs. Prescott forbears to tell me so."

He heard a step on the stairs and with a hasty good night, he turned to leave the room, feeling that this was not the time to intrude on the family.

"Well," thought Jean, looking after him, "when it comes to the point, he does their Christianity after all; and that leaves me alone, unless I turn Mohammedan!"

CHAPTER XXXV

AFTERWARD

THE night of the funeral it began to rain; and it rained steadily for three days. It was, besides, the beginning of Moharrem. Religious processions could be heard making their way through the slimy streets. The Mohammedans were celebrating the martydom of Hassan and Husain, who had been killed in battle not long after the death of Mohammed. Over the wrongs of these two, they worked themselves into a frenzy; and as the days went on, men were often seen in the streets slashing their breasts with knives and streaming with blood. This atmosphere of fanatical excitement added its share to the discomfort of the missionaries, besides distracting the attention of the civic authorities from their cause.

The days dragged on very slowly and very full of work and anxiety. Hundreds of women of all ranks came to call on Margaret Lawrence to "heal her head." She saw them all, talked with them calmly about her sorrow, explained to them the hopes that encouraged her to take up life again and the motives that made it impossible to curse the murderer or to indulge in ostentatious grief. She made no sign, when, with unintentional brutality, they turned the knife in her wounds; and she sent them away marvelling at the religion that could work such wonders in a human heart.

Jean Stuart resented with all her might this untimely and exorbitant demand on the missionary spirit. She begged Margaret to send the women away and to take the rest she needed for herself. Margaret only said that it was a great opportunity and went quietly on her way. Then Jean fell to and began helping her. It being the Persian custom in a house of mourning to serve each caller with a tiny cup of coffee, Jean took this part of the work upon herself.

"Whatever should I have done without you?" said Margaret one evening after Jean had stood by her through an unusually long and trying session. Jean made her lie down and brought her a glass of water before saying anything. Then she knelt by the sofa and taking Margaret's hand, rubbed her cheek against it.

"I want to tell you," she said, "that I was going to telegraph some friends of mine to come up from Bushire and take me home."

Margaret started up and looked very mournfully at her.

"I planned this," Jean went on, "before I went to Kurdistan. I meant them to get here about the time my contract should expire. It's time now to telegraph; and I should think you would be glad to have me go; but if I could help you by staying—"

Margaret Lawrence sat up and put her arms around Jean's neck. "Oh Jean," she sobbed, "don't leave me yet, unless you must."

And Jean went away to her room, a little comforted.

That evening she wheedled Margaret into going to bed early. She herself sat down alone in the sitting-room to darn the children's stockings.

Here Thorley Prescott found her when he came to inquire for the health of the family. That at least was the reason he gave for his coming and he justified it by making inquiries that were both minute and voluble — for him.

All the time, his eyes were on the stocking Jean continued to darn, and at last he burst out with an abrupt return to his old blunt manner:—

"You darning stockings! I bet they'll be lumpy!"

Jean held out to him the one that was stretched over her hand; and he examined it with a care that made her smile.

"Perfectly flat," he admitted at last, "and very neat. What is there that you can't do well?"

"I can't thank you as well as I should like, for the first compliment you have ever paid me. I'm too much surprised." She beamed at him, pleased that they should be talking together again, in the old natural way.

And now he sat silent, clearing his throat from time to time; and she, seeing that he was getting ready to speak, waited quietly and went on sewing.

At last he lifted his head to say: -

"To-day when I was in the cemetery, I wondered if you would care to see Dan's grave." He paused, as if for an answer. Jean hesitated.

"Don't go if it would be painful to you," said Thorley. "I didn't know."

"Do you mean," asked Jean, "that you are suggesting my going at any particular time?"

"Yes. I rode down to ask if you would go to-morrow. Father is to be with me; and the Sheikh insists on my bringing an escort always."

Jean's eyes searched his face. "I'm glad he rides with you," she said.

"It's all nonsense," he answered, "for the Hadji is in Turkey; but it pleases my father, so I let Ismaili and his men dog me."

"I'm glad," said Jean. "It relieves me - a little."

Thorley's face lit up with a smile that died away again very suddenly.

"Do you care to go?" he asked with his eyes on the floor.

"Let me ask Mrs. Lawrence what there is to do here. I don't like to leave her with extra work on her hands."

He rose as she left the room and paced restlessly around until her return. "I wish I could really do something for

her," he mused. "This isn't anything, but it will give her a few hours in the open air. I know she loves that; but she wouldn't go for pleasure now."

When Jean came back she said that she would accept Mr. Prescott's kindness, if he would start early so as to get her back in time to help with callers in the afternoon.

"In that case we had better start at six," said Thorley. "I want also to show you something connected with Our Work. You haven't inspected it for a very long time."

"I'll be ready," said Jean. "You were good to think of asking me, and you'll be glad to know that Mrs. Lawrence is pleased at my going. She asks us to find some flowers for the grave, if possible. She thinks the wild hyacinths may be in bloom."

She looked questioningly at him. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction; but he only said:—

"We'll do what we can. I'm glad you're going. Good night."

She detained him. "One thing more," she said in a nervous way not at all natural to her. "I hope you are not intending to ride down with us."

"Surely I am."

"I'm going to ask you not to."

"Why?"

"That is, unless you expect to spend the night here. I can't bear to think of your riding up again so near nightfall."

He laughed out and checked himself with a look of compunction.

"That's all right," said Jean. "We all laugh — when we can."

"I know," he said, "but it doesn't seem right for me to come in and laugh."

She laughed at that, a little. "Then it's settled," she pursued, "that I am to ride back with your father."

"Not at all," he declared. "I won't take you one step, unless you will let me see for myself that you get back safely."

"Ah," she breathed, "then you do think there is danger; and yet you will ride back and forth."

"We'll give it up," he said brusquely. "I won't take you if you feel like that."

"Not for myself," she cried. "Please don't think so. It's only that I'm afraid for you."

She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands, ashamed that he should see how unnerved she was.

He stood looking at her, sorry that she should be upset, yet with a strange wild pleasure which he could not understand, tugging at his heart.

"Jean," he said at last, "believe me when I tell you that if I were in danger of being shot, I should not dream of taking you outside the city. And if you don't cheer up pretty quickly, I won't take you anyway."

At this, Jean uncovered her face; but could think of nothing more brilliant to say than that he would have to take her now because he had promised.

"At six o'clock, then," he said; "good night."

The touch of her hand gave him such a thrill of joy that he strode away cursing himself for a disloyal lover and an unfaithful friend.

"After this," he muttered, "I won't trust myself to go near her. I thought Dan's death had sobered me enough to keep me from feeling that way now."

CHAPTER XXXVI

OUR WORK AGAIN

In good time the next morning, Jean Stuart and the two Prescotts reached Akbar. They had been delayed a little because the river was swollen with the recent rains. At the first ford they were obliged to let their horses swim part way. This caused them to go around by the longer road to avoid the other two crossings. Yet their horses were so eager in the freshness of the early morning, that they made the whole trip in about the usual time.

"It's a pleasure to ride with such a horsewoman," said Mr. Prescott as he helped Miss Stuart dismount. "There's no need for making concession to feminine weakness when you are of the party."

"Dr. MacColl is just the same kind," said Thorley. "I never was delayed a minute by either of 'em. Now will you people rest in the house while I see to the men, or will you make the rounds with me?"

"I'd like to make the rounds," said Jean, promptly. The brisk ride in the warm sunshine had restored color to her cheeks and light to her eyes. Thorley was elated at seeing her look like herself again.

"It's all very well for you youngsters to be so energetic," said Mr. Prescott, "but I confess I should like a cup of coffee before I start on anything as arduous as Thor's rounds."

"Oh yes, I told the cook to have some ready for us. At last he has learned to make it Father's way."

Thorley led them, as he spoke, into the end house, the upper story of which was still reserved for the use of the missionaries. They took their coffee in the same room where they had been eating dinner when the news was brought that Isaac of Arawan had been shot. The scene came back vividly to Jean as she drank. She was glad to finish quickly and go out again into the spring day.

She and Mr. Prescott followed Thorley all around the works. She saw the men excavating for the permanent addition to the first rough little reservoir, saw the beginnings of the trenches where the pipes were to be laid that would carry running water to the city Compound and the College. She saw the fields where the wheat had just been sowed that would feed all the mission schools through the next winter. Most wonderful of all, she saw a band of clean, intelligent workmen, and could not believe that they were the crowd of ruffians at whom she had shuddered in the fall

"Surely these are not the same men who were here last December," she murmured to Mr. John Prescott.

"The very same," he answered triumphantly. "Haven't they changed, though! But you must go down to the village and see their homes. There's a sight for Persia—contented women and healthy children!"

Thorley returned to them at this moment. "What are you bragging about, Father?" he asked with affectionate raillery.

Gratification radiated from Mr. Prescott. "Miss Stuart didn't recognize these men," he said. "She thought they were some that you had polished up for the occasion."

"They have changed, haven't they?" said Thorley much pleased.

Then his face sobered. "The trouble is, though, that I ought to let most of them go next week; and I doubt if the Station will let me get a fresh lot."

"What's the matter?" said Jean. "Is the money giving out?"

"We have money in the bank. You know that. We've been selling water-pipes, you know, and we could sell enough more to pay for the reservoir and the waterway to the city. Only most of these men have little plots of ground somewhere, from which they might get enough this summer to feed them scantily next winter. It was the failure of these crops last summer that threw them on our hands."

"What reason is there to think they won't fail this summer?" asked Jean.

"Well, it's a risk, of course, but it's one that farmers take all over the world; only these men don't know how to guard against failure. If I could keep them here one summer, I could show them a thing or two; that is, I think I could."

He squared his shoulders and smiled, looking so capable that it would have been hard for any one to doubt his ability. His present listeners perhaps were not very hard to convince.

"But if I let them go, I must do it right off; for they ought to be planting. Most of them did go away while I was in Kurdistan; but the ground was too hard for them to do much; and they all flocked back to me when they heard about Dan."

"Why was that?" asked Jean.

"Well, I hardly know. Some of them perhaps were frightened and felt safer inside our walls; but it did seem as if most of them came just because they wanted to stand by me."

"That must have pleased you," cried Jean.

"It did," said Thorley the Taciturn.

"But you haven't told me," said Jean, as they turned back toward the house, "why there is any question about sending these men away. If they are comfortable here and if there will be work for them all summer and enough to last over into next winter so that they won't suffer from the

loss of a year's crops, why isn't it better to let them stay, especially if you can teach them to make more out of their land in the future?"

Thorley hesitated.

"The difficulty is this, Miss Stuart," interposed John Prescott, "that to continue industrial work on so large a scale after it has ceased to be immediately necessary for famine relief, is a departure from the evangelical method of conducting mission work. And to such a departure, some of our colleagues are very much opposed."

The look of absolute bewilderment on Jean's face, forced a short laugh from Thorley. She put out her hand to check him, saying courteously to the older man:—

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand. Will you excuse my stupidity and explain a little more?"

"I'll translate," said Thorley. "Father means that some missionaries think that all mission work is wasted which is not directly religious. This is called the evangelical basis. In the past some missionaries have grudged even the time spent in the secular part of educational work. No one here, thank goodness, goes to that extreme. But several of the Station feel that except in time of famine, industrial work is a waste of the energy that should be put into preaching."

"Oh," said Jean, "but I thought you weren't expected to preach, anyway."

"If I wasn't working here," said Thorley, "I could go back to the Treasury and the Press; and the rest could do more preaching. Since Mr. Freyer's recovery, he has been helping Dr. Lawrence with the Press, besides running the Treasury with Standish under him; but now that spring has come, they ought both to be left free for touring, and really, I don't know who will do that part of the work if I don't."

"It is a grave question under the present circumstances," said Mr. Prescott. "The new man for whom we shall have

to ask the Board, cannot possibly get here before the fall, if then. Meantime Dan's place is empty and Thorley's old place in the city as well. It comes to this: whether the work at Akbar is important enough to be kept up at any cost. I believe it is, and I have a plan for making it possible. Only I do think that the men whose farms warrant it, should be encouraged to return to them."

"I think so, too," said Thorley. "I shall send a lot away on Monday, but I want permission to hire men in their places if the work warrants it. I want to make this thing a business. I believe the success of a Christian business would do more for Persia than any amount of preaching."

"When is it to be decided?" asked Jean.

"I doubt if it can be discussed day after to-morrow," said Mr. Prescott, gravely, turning to his son. "There will be too much else."

"I hope they won't bring it up," agreed Thorley. "It would be a shame to quarrel, after passing resolutions about Dan and asking for a man to take his place."

"But why need you quarrel?" asked Jean. "If the money is supplied and you are willing to do the work, what right have the others to interfere?"

"Technically," answered Thorley, "this work belongs to the Station — not to me," he paused to smile ruefully at her, "nor even to you."

"If it did belong to me," cried Jean, "I should let you do it exactly as you thought best."

He thanked her with a look, while Mr. Prescott summoned his courage to ask hesitantly,—

"Then you would not be willing that the balance of the money should be diverted into another channel?"

"Certainly not," she flashed. Then, as a new thought struck her, "You don't mean that they are getting up a scheme to use it for evangelical purposes!"

Thorley laughed outright. "As usual you've hit the nail on the head," he applauded.

"Perhaps we should not have spoken of it," said Mr. Prescott.

"Since you have," demanded Jean, "you will please tell me what the scheme is."

John Prescott looked at her, half frightened, and was silent.

"Certainly we'll tell you," Thorley put in. "They want to buy land for a church in the city and begin building it."

"There's no doubt," said Mr. Prescott mildly, "that the church is very much needed."

They had been standing in front of the end house for some minutes. The pipe factory and some of the new trenches could be seen from where they stood; and Jean moved a little so that she could look back at the reservoir.

"They want you to leave all this just where it is," she said, slowly, "and let the natives think that your winter's work was all a bluff, that they can come to you any time when they have been shiftless and imprudent and get you to start an industry with no regard for its commercial value?

"I gave my money for this work, and I will not have one *chahi* of it used for any other purpose. If it is not used for this, it shall lie idle."

She walked into the house as she spoke; and the two men followed her, Mr. Prescott whispering apprehensively to his son, "I hope no one will think we have prejudiced her mind."

"I don't care a d-darn what any one thinks!" declared Thorley with pride in his voice and something more potent than pride in the look he sent after the stately figure of Miss Stuart.

"How she understands!" he was thinking. "And how she speaks and how she looks! To-day I won't miss one

flicker of her eyelids; for after this—" and he hurried to catch up with her so that he might not waste another moment.

"Are you tired," he asked, "or cold? If not, shall we start out again very soon? I have something to show you before we go," his eager voice fell, "to the cemetery."

CHAPTER XXXVII

REVELATIONS

"ARE you good for a little climb?" asked Thorley, as he led Jean into the path to his cabin.

"Oh, yes," she answered happily, "I know this path; and

the view from your roof will be beautiful to-day."

"It's something else that I have to show you now," said Thorley. "Give me your hand, please. I must pull you up the steepest places."

She let him help her into a side path very steep and slippery. After a few minutes of breathless climbing, they emerged into a little open sunny spot where the ground was overlaid with a glistening cover of wild white hyacinths. In a moment Jean was on her knees among them, putting down her face to caress the lovely things and to drink in their perfume.

"I thought she'd like them." Thorley smiled as he said the words to himself. Aloud he presently added, "Shall I begin picking?"

"Oh yes, please. You pick; and I'll make them into a great big; beautiful wreath." Jean sat down on the ground; but Thorley silently placed his coat at one side for her to sit on; and she had the good sense this time to do as he wished without protest.

When the wreath was nearly finished, she spied a few purple irises growing by themselves. "Please get me those," she said to Thorley, "and then we shall have Dan's two colors: white for the saint and purple for the conqueror." Her voice broke; and she bent low over the wreath to hide her face.

Thorley got her the flowers without a word and watched as she wove them into the wreath.

"He was a conqueror," he said very low, as she held it up for him to see. "I guess no one knew how hard it was for him always to be cheerful and brave and contented." He smiled down at her as he said the last word, "but he conquered himself; and now—"

Jean rose and began picking flowers as fast as she could. "Now," she said hesitating and turning her face away, "I think he has left plenty of work for us others to do, who haven't conquered ourselves to speak of. I mean myself," she burst out, turning impulsively back to Thorley, her arms full of flowers and her face beautiful with an expression he had never seen on it.

"Sometimes in these last days since I've been helping Margaret, even I have wished I could learn to be like them, praying and loving and giving. I don't know that I ever could learn to forgive or that I want to learn that. But last night I tried to pray a little; and it seemed almost as if Somebody heard and came near to comfort me."

"Ah, Jean," he said, with shining eyes, "I hope Dan hears you now, and I know God does."

"You know God hears?" cried Jean.

"Yes," he answered, gravely. "I learned that here last winter when I was all alone on my cabin roof at night. The days were full of such work as I thought a Creator God must love. The nights were still and lonely. I got to thinking out loud about what I had done that day and what I had better do next. I got to feeling how great the work was and how much I needed big help, the kind that you can't get from any other man. And the first I knew I was looking up at the stars and asking."

There was a silence between them for a long minute, Jean looking at Thorley, Thorley gazing above her head.

"After that," he went on, "the things I had stopped be-

lieving didn't matter. I knew. And I have gone on learning little by little ever since. No man can take away from me now what I have learned."

Jean came closer to him and laid one hand on his arm.

"Some night when you are looking at the stars," she whispered, "ask Him to teach me too."

"I have," he answered, smiling into her eyes. Then he stooped to pick up the flowers she had dropped; and she remembered suddenly why they were there and began picking again as if her life depended on it.

When they started down the path Thorley's coat was full of loose flowers; and the great wreath hung around Jean's neck.

They went straight to the cemetery, saying little as they went, and hushed to absolute silence when they reached Dan's grave. No stone had yet been placed there; so Jean laid the wreath on the grave itself and scattered loose flowers to cover all the rest of the mound. Then, with deft fingers, she gathered up the hyacinths that were left, making them into two loose bunches. The smaller she placed on Hilgar's grave and the larger she held out to Thorley.

"Perhaps you will like to put it on your mother's grave," she said very softly.

He took the hand that held the flowers and drew her with him to the other side of the little cemetery. There he knelt beside a myrtle-covered mound and together they placed the fragrant flowers on it. Then as he rose from his knees and stood back to let her read the inscription on the stone, suddenly there was a loud report as if a cannon had gone off not far from them.

To Jean it seemed that Hadji Husain had appeared in the flesh, firing at Thorley. With one wild cry, she threw herself in front of him, spreading out her arms to shield him with her body. "Oh, Thorley," she cried, "I won't let him get you."

"Jean," he said, "my men are blasting with gunpowder."

She looked at him with wide eyes, refusing to be convinced and trembling so that she could hardly stand. He repeated his assurances of safety with every detail that he thought might convince her. At last he took her by the shoulders and turned her so that she could see the figure of his father standing on the roof of the end house and looking unconcernedly in the direction of the reservoir, whence smoke was rising.

Suddenly she understood, wrenched herself away from him, and moved swiftly toward the gate of the cemetery. In her nervous haste she could not unlatch it; and Thorley hurried to help her, still urging her not to be afraid; for he could not understand why she should still be troubled.

Before he opened the gate, he bent his head to get a glimpse of her face. She did not seem frightened exactly, though she was trembling; but the minute her eyes met his, they filled with angry tears, the bright color flamed all over her face, her hands clenched each other so that the nails sank into the flesh; and she turned her back on him almost with violence.

Still puzzled, he stood behind her, watching the crimson creep into her neck and hearing the dry sobs that she forced back into her throat.

"Jean," he cried, "what is the matter?"

For one breathless instant she faced him. "Never call me that again," she commanded.

"Look at me," he said quietly. "What have I done to make you angry? You must tell me." He spoke so sternly that she had to obey him.

Slowly she turned toward him, slowly she raised her eyes to his. But in that second he saw.

"Jean," he cried, "you love me!"

"Hush," she said, "how dare you? How can you—here? Open that gate and let me go."

"If I let you go now, will you talk with me later?" His hand was on the latch.

"No, never as long as I live," she cried, and she burst into tears and sank in a little heap by the fence.

He turned away then and stood at a distance until she was quieter.

"Please call me," he said over his shoulder, "when you're ready to have the gate opened."

"Now, if you please," she answered in a voice subdued by weeping.

So he went back to her. She was calmer now; and she faced him, still defiant. "Remember, you are not to say one word," she said.

"Jean," he answered, "if you don't love me, this is the time to tell me so calmly. But you will have to look in my eyes and say it without anger."

She tried to face him, failed, and hid her face in her hands. Then he opened the gate.

"There's a bench outside where you can sit down," he said. He took her arm and led her to it.

"Jean," he resumed, standing in front of her, "you're right in saying that this is not the time for me to speak. I will write to-night and insist on being given my freedom. Then I will come to you again. Now I will leave you for a few minutes. When you're ready, please call. We'll go back to the house and have lunch. The horses shall be ready immediately afterwards."

"Mr. Prescott," said Jean. She sat very straight on the bench and she seemed to have recovered all her self-control and dignity while he was speaking.

"Not now, please," he said, walking away.

"Now," she insisted, "I must ask you to hear a few words."

He came back and stood before her again.

"You have misunderstood me completely. Let me ex-

plain to you once for all that I never could love any man enough to allow of his breaking a promise of marriage for me. If you break your engagement, it will be at your own risk. I will not marry you in any case; nor is there any power strong enough to make me change my mind, even if I loved you."

"I will break my engagement," said Thorley. "I'll make her break it now. When I wrote before, it was simply on her account, because I knew I couldn't love her enough. I had no hope then of winning you."

"When you wrote before?" asked Jean, her curiosity getting the upper hand. "Did you tell her you didn't love her, and did she keep you to your word?"

"I told her I loved you."

"And she said?"

"She said she would not take amiss anything I did or omitted to do and she believed all would yet come out right, if we held to our trust in each other."

"And she still speaks of marrying you?"

"Yes."

"Then she never got your letter. Have you ever mentioned me again? Has she ever spoken of me?"

"No."

"Then in the name of all that is sensible, let your engagement stand for the present at least. Your fiancée is evidently ignorant that your fancy has ever strayed from her. Let her remain in ignorance. I am soon going away."

"Going away?" he cried.

"Did you suppose I would stay in this place forever?" She rose as she spoke, and began to walk rapidly toward the house. "I have an important lawsuit at home that needs my attention. Some friends are waiting at Bushire for me to summon them as escorts. I shall telegraph them to-day."

"Jean," said Thorley, striding along beside her, and speak-

ing very solemnly. "I believe that letter has been lost. I will write another to-night. The answer may get here before you leave. If not, I will follow you to America."

"Remember how you feel about a promise." Her tone had lost its hauteur. She was pleading with him now. "It will not bring you happiness to break your word. Besides, you must think of the girl."

"I do think of her. It was for her sake that I wrote before. I had no notion then of offering myself to you. I had no idea then that you could —"

She cut him short with a stateliness which he was man enough to enjoy. "I cannot," she said, "and I will not. No matter what happens, you have my final word about this very disagreeable subject. I must ask you as my friend never to reopen it." Then with a sudden change to the charming manner which had so often proved irresistible, "You are my friend, aren't you?" and pausing at the door of the house, she held out her hand.

Thorley took it firmly in both of his.

"I am," he answered; and there being apparently nothing more to say they went in to lunch.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE LETTER AND MRS. PRESCOTT

In spite of everything, Thorley Prescott escorted Jean Stuart back to the city that Saturday afternoon. Jean reasoned that it would not seem strange to Mr. John Prescott if she were rather silent after her visit to the cemetery; so she did not try to keep up a conversation. He, seeing her red eyelids, honored her sensibility, and after a few attempts to talk with his son, fell silent also. As for Thorley, he had nothing to say beyond a bare yes or no, grunted grudgingly in answer to a direct question. He seemed to be thinking out some problem; for at times his lips moved, and once in a while he nodded his head or tossed it impatiently. Withal he looked so grim over his cogitations that his father wondered what he could be planning.

Mr. Prescott had been very uneasy for a time after he learned of Thorley's engagement to Esther Wilcox and of his love for Jean Stuart. At first the father felt that his boy was entitled to win the wife he wanted at any cost. But of late he had settled down to the belief that Esther Wilcox was better suited after all to be Thorley's helpmate. When he saw Thorley and Jean return from the Kurdish trip apparently on terms of sober friendship, he was much relieved. And he had the audacity to hope that after Miss Stuart's departure from Muramna, Thorley would forget her or if he remembered, would be glad to have escaped the folly of trying to turn a woman like her into a missionary. It cannot be denied that Mr. Prescott may have been influenced by his wife, who detested Jean Stuart and lost no opportunity

of branding her as an alien and a pagan. He had to admit that Jean did not seem to be a religious person nor a consecrated worker; but he had made Mrs. Prescott angry more than once by stating that in spite of her shortcomings, he could not help liking the lady herself. At the same time, the thought of her as a daughter-in-law had become alarming to him. He had no real reason now to feel that the grimness of his son was connected with Miss Stuart. Yet all the way to the city, he felt his uneasiness returning; and he was glad when at last they all rode into the Compound.

Mr. Prescott made haste to dismount at the Lawrences' door that he might be the one to help Miss Stuart off her horse. Quick as he was, Thorley was quicker. Now Jean was carrying a bunch of hyacinths which she had asked Thorley to get for her to give Mrs. Lawrence, and these she allowed him to hold while she let his father help her down.

"Thank you both very much," she said graciously as she prepared to mount the steps.

She held out her hand for the flowers. Thorley gave them to her, openly keeping one for himself.

"I want them all, please," she insisted; and he obeyed her with a deepening grimness about the mouth that did not go with the smile in his eyes.

Now Mr. Prescott knew that he had grounds for his uneasiness; and he resolved to speak seriously with his son at the first opportunity; though, knowing that Thorley had already chosen some definite course of action, he did not relish the prospect of offering contrary advice. However he got no chance to talk with his son that evening. The one question Thorley asked at supper, was, —

"What time does the mail go out on Sunday?"

"It goes out on Saturday now," said Mrs. Prescott.

"What!" cried Thorley, half starting from his chair. "Then it's gone already?"

"You interrupted me, Thorley," said his stepmother grandly. "I was about to say that we, as Christians, cannot be too thankful for the change."

"Oh, Lord," said Thorley, a remark which, though brief, kept Mrs. Prescott in conversation for the rest of the meal.

After supper Thorley retired to his room and, locking the door, proceeded to spend his entire stock of American paper and almost the whole night in the composition of a letter which turned out to be rather short after all.

His father knocked at the door and was more or less politely refused admittance. His stepmother knocked and received no reply. The remarks which she hurled through the door were likewise disregarded; but the remarks which she later made to her husband were not to be so easily escaped, and it is doubtful whether any of the Prescott family slept very much that night.

Jean Stuart slept, if possible, even less than they did. She had to devise a telegram to Bertha Courtlandt Mullins; she had to decide which of the gentlemen she would ask to send it for her; and she had to consider what reason she would give Margaret Lawrence for the very sudden and radical change in her plans.

"I'll wait until the mail to-morrow," she decided, after several hours of thought. "That may bring a letter about the lawsuit which will help me out a little. I've told Margaret that I had a suit on hand which might go against me; and the fact is that I ought to get back pretty quickly. I never should have left Mr. Erskine to prosecute Mercer Bryant. He's too chicken-hearted. But I just couldn't bear to appear in court against that man. And now I may have to, after all; for I'll die sooner than let Mercer Bryant bamfoozle me."

A sudden thought made her writhe in the bed and a groan escaped her as she buried her face in the pillow.

"And now," said a voice within her, "you have put your-

self on a level with Mercer and Delia. Oh, how that girl would hate you, if she knew what you have done! If only she could be kept from knowing!"

Jean Stuart sat up in her bed and shivered with something icier than the cold. "But I know he is going to tell her, and I can't stop him. Will he tell her that I love him? Oh God, I can't bear that."

She jumped out on the floor and walked up and down in the moonlight. Then she thought she heard a sound and got back into bed, crouching under the covers.

"Jean," said a voice at the door, "is anything the matter? Are you sick?"

"Aren't you asleep?" said Jean, as if she had just waked up. She leaped out of bed and opened the door. "What can I do for you, Margaret? Would it help you to sleep if I rubbed your head?"

"No, thank you. I guess I'll be more sleepy by and by. Those Moharrem noises startled me several times, just as I was dropping off. They aren't so loud now — quite."

"Stay here with me," said Jean. "You can hardly hear them at all."

"No, thank you, the children might wake and miss me. They are so easily frightened now, poor little things. Go back to bed, Jean; you're shivering. My, but it's a comfort to have you here!"

"How can I leave her?" thought Jean as she watched her go down the hall with her lamp.

Then she went back to bed and fell to thinking about the girl whom Thorley had promised to marry. He had not told her name; and Jean supposed it was one that she had never heard. She wished he had mentioned it. It might have helped her to form a picture of the girl. Whereupon she began to form a picture out of nothing and became in the process more wide awake than ever. So she gave it up in disgust, lighted her lamp, and began to study Turkish.

About the same time, Thorley finished his letter, read it over for the last time, put it into an envelope which he sealed and addressed, tore the sheets he had spoiled into minute fragments, which on second thoughts he carefully burned on a brass tray, then went to bed, and *slept*.

In the morning he rose early and went downstairs with the letter in the pocket of his riding-coat. There he begged a cup of coffee from the cook and sent an order to the stables for his horse and his outriders. Returning to the sittingroom, he heard steps in his father's study above his head.

Mr. Prescott had not slept very well when at last he was allowed the chance to try; and the snores of his wife had become so insistent that he had escaped to his study where, in dressing-gown and slippers, he was looking over his sermon.

"Why, Thorley," he exclaimed, in an undertone, as his son entered the room quietly without knocking. "Why are you up and dressed so early?"

"I must ride up again this morning. I should have gone last night; but I wanted to be sure this letter was in your own hands. I want it mailed next Saturday without fail. Please put it into the post-bag yourself."

"Why — but — Thorley. I shall see you again before Saturday."

"Perhaps not. I'll try of course to get to Station meeting; but to-morrow will be very busy and I may not make it."

"Your name should be on the resolutions."

"I should be there; and I will be if I can. If not, you will explain to the Lawrences that I was dismissing men and simply could not leave."

"Very well. But how about this letter? I see it is directed to Mr. Smith of Tabriz. Is it more than usually important?"

"Yes. I may as well tell you. I've written to ask that

the engagement be broken. Jea — um — I am convinced that the other letter was never received."

"But, my son," said Mr. Prescott, very unhappy, "is this haste and abruptness necessary? If Miss Wilcox, as you believe, has not received your other communication, this request will come on her like a thunderclap."

"I guess not, Father," said Thorley with an unpleasant smile. "My letters lately haven't been any too affectionate and, come to think of it, hers have showed that she knew it."

"At the same time you should show her every consideration."

"I hope I have. I made the letter as decent as I could. It isn't a thing you can do with any airs and graces."

Mr. Prescott had to smile at the incongruous picture. "But, my son," he pursued, "why can't you wait until Miss Wilcox herself comes back to Muramna? That should occur now in a few weeks if I am correctly informed. You will then be in a position to manage this delicate matter with proper deliberation; or perhaps when you see the young lady again, it may be—"

"It may be what?"

"That you will be content to let matters remain in statu quo."

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, Father! Plain English is bad enough. This letter has got to go. Now will you take charge of it or won't you? I beg your pardon for being so confoundedly crusty. Can't help it this time."

"Can't you ride down yourself on Saturday, if you still wish the letter to go? By that time —"

"No, I cannot; and the letter is going. If you won't send it, I'll ask — well, Mrs. Franklin, I guess, or Dr. MacColl."

"No, no, Thor. If it must go, I'll send it myself; but I do wish, my dear, dear boy, that you would take a little more time for reflection."

Thorley had been fidgeting with his riding-crop all

through this speech. He managed to hear it to the end without interruption and now he smiled grimly.

"Oh, I won't fail to reflect. A man can't act like a cur without some compunction; but for all that, the letter must go; and no matter how much I reflect, my mind will not change."

"Very well, Thorley," said Mr. Prescott. He took the letter and locked it up in a drawer of his writing-table.

Thorley's tones had been incautiously loud. As a result, a head horny with crimping-pins now poked itself through the door into the bedroom.

Thorley fled.

"Was that your son, Mr. Prescott?" inquired a voice still husky with slumber.

"Yes, Melissa. Thorley had to ride back without delay and he has just gone." Mr. Prescott spoke with propitiatory uneasiness.

"His manners seem to be even worse than usual," remarked the voice; and the crimping-pins were withdrawn.

Mr. John Prescott spent a very uncomfortable week. On Monday he was asked by Dr. Franklin to send a telegram to Bushire.

"I don't know why she asked me," growled the doctor. "I never send telegrams — too busy and don't know how — but I said I'd see to it. Rather unkind of the girl to leave us now, seems to me. Margaret Lawrence is all broken up, my wife says. And there's no telling when Esther Wilcox will get a chance to come over from Tabriz. The children need occupation now, if ever they did. The poor little things are all worked up. Harriet cries every time I leave the house. Well, school's begun to-day anyway; and Miss Stuart says she'll keep it up until the last minute. Says she hates to go, and pretty near cried when I asked her why she was deserting us.

"Why is she going?

"Something about a lawsuit. I didn't get anything very

clear. But it's money, I guess. The richer you are, the more you hate to be cheated. But there, I oughtn't to say a word about her. She's been *generous* enough, land knows!"

Mr. Prescott sent the telegram; but he was so inconsistent as to feel very badly about it and to wish he could tell Thorley.

Thorley did get down to the Station meeting, coming in late and riding up again afterwards, in spite of the protests of all his colleagues. All he said to his father was, "Don't forget that letter," and he did not even look up at the Lawrences' windows as he passed.

Now, as the week dragged on, Mr. Prescott became so rushed with overseeing Standish at the Treasury and getting men to preach for the coming Sunday, that he stopped opening his table drawer three or four times a day to look at the fatal letter. In fact, all through Thursday and Friday he never looked at it once, and on Saturday he went back to the house for it, only an hour before mail-time.

When he opened the drawer, it was not in its usual place on top. He felt down all the sides and failed to find it. Then he turned everything out; and it was not there. He looked all through his desk and all over the room. Then he shouted for his wife.

The servants, in consternation at the change from his usual manner, informed him that the Khanum had gone out to the College to attend a ladies' prayer-meeting at Mrs. Franklin's.

Mr. Prescott groaned. He looked at his watch and saw that there was not time to ride out and back, before the mail closed. It seemed as if there were nothing he could do. Then, like an inspiration, there came the thought of the telephone. Now Mr. Prescott was in many respects an old-fashioned man. He had lived so long in the Orient that he did not feel the need of modern improvements, and he had thought it a waste when Dan Lawrence on his last furlough,

had collected from friends of the Mission, money enough for a small telephone which, on his return to Muramna, he had set up between the city and the College. The telephone had long since proved itself invaluable; but Mr. Prescott had never admitted the necessity for it and had never been known to use it himself.

The thought of it now came as a godsend to his troubled mind. He lost no time in rushing over to the Lawrences', where he electrified the whole family (who happened to be gathered in the sitting-room) by asking breathlessly if it would be possible for him to use the telephone and whether Mrs. Lawrence thought he could make his wife understand a message, if indeed a way could be found to bring her to the other end of the wire.

Mrs. Lawrence rose with alacrity when she understood his wishes. She had always been sensitive about his attitude toward the telephone because she thought it showed disapproval of Dan. So it pleased her not a little to do him this small favor.

"Come right into the dining-room," she said briskly. "Mrs. Prescott is at Dr. Franklin's, you say? Then I'll ask to have her come to the 'phone at once. You'd like me to call up, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, if it is not too much trouble."

"Not at all. It's a pleasure. Oh, is this you, Mrs. Franklin? Is Mrs. Prescott in the house? Please say that her husband is here and would like to speak with her. Yes, her husband. Yes, Mr. Prescott. Yes, I know it; but he's here."

A pause, during which Mr. Prescott scarcely breathed.

"Oh, is this you, Mrs. Prescott? Yes, your husband is here."

She held out the receiver to Mr. Prescott.

"What do I do?" said he in a whisper, taking the receiver as if he expected it to shoot him.

"Hold this to your ear," said Margaret encouragingly, "and speak into the hole."

Mr. Prescott held the receiver very gingerly several inches from his ear and stood clearing his throat and shifting from one foot to the other. In the meantime all the Lawrences could hear Mrs. Prescott at the other end making the wire hot with *Hellos* and *Who is its*.

Mrs. Lawrence pushed the receiver up to Mr. Prescott's ear. Until then the sound had been a confused mumble to him; but now he recognized his wife's voice; and it was funny to see the expression of gratified alarm that overspread his countenance.

"Yes, Melissa, it is I," he said, roaring into the telephone in a voice that could have been heard by an audience of ten thousand. "Yes, I wanted to speak to you. No, I am all right. Yes, I saw to the *pilau*. No, I have *not* had any dinner. Because I was busy about something else. Now do keep still, Melissa, and give me a chance to say what I want. Have you been house-cleaning in my study? House-cleaning, I say. Yes, in my study. Well, have you?"

By this time, his voice was loud enough to break the wires; and the children in the other room were in fits of silent laughter. Even Dr. Lawrence smiled; and Jean Stuart had to bite her lips.

"Melissa," roared Mr. Prescott, "I want to know if you have unlocked the right-hand upper small drawer of my desk. You have? Did you find a letter there? A letter addressed to Rev. Abijah Smith at Tabriz. In my hand-writing? Why, no. What difference does that make? Did you find the letter? Well, yes, it was in Thorley's handwriting. Did you find it? You took it out because you knew the Smiths had started for America this week? What have you done with it? Do I understand you to say that you have it with you now? Oh-h-h, you have just given it to Kasha Yussuf to take to Thorley at Akbar? Can you

send some one to overtake him? Yes, it's very important. I would not say so, Melissa, if it were not. Oh-h-h, he left half an hour ago! Why didn't you say so at first?"

He dropped the receiver. "Mrs. Lawrence," he shouted, with anything but his usual mildness. "How do you shut this thing off? I have finished."

There may have been a little malice in the way Mrs. Lawrence hung up the receiver and tinkled the bell; for, though the other end rang repeatedly, she made no motion to answer.

"He'll talk to his wife by telephone again," said Jean Stuart when Mr. Prescott had left the house, closing the front door with a bang that was not at all like him. "I venture to say that he's very seldom in a position to shut her off when he chooses."

As for Mr. Prescott, he went home and scolded the servants, thus increasing by leaps and bounds the respect in which he was held by the household.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE CASTING VOTE

HISTORY has never revealed what Thorley Prescott did on Saturday afternoon when he received the missive from his stepmother, enclosing his own envelope directed to Mr. Smith. Mr. John Prescott, who rode up to preach for him on Sunday, found him in a very uncommunicative mood. On receiving his father's explanation about the letter, he replied only,—

"That's all right, it wasn't your fault."

When asked if he cared to have the letter mailed next Saturday, he answered:—

"No thanks. It wasn't fair to make you do it. I'll have to come down one or two days to help with the balance. Freyer has been away; and Standish has got the books into a mess."

This was by far the longest speech he made during the twenty-four hours that his father spent on the mountain. Even the news of the week, recounted in Mr. Prescott's sprightliest vein, failed to draw comments. He grunted when told that the British Consul from Tabriz was on his way to help them with their diplomatic difficulties and to awe the Governor into taking some real action about Hadji Husain. At the news that the Hadji had actually been seen within fifty miles of the city, and that credible witnesses had heard him boast of having killed one of the Inglesi, he shrugged his shoulders and looked a little more gloomy.

Mr. Prescott hesitated over his next item. He had concluded to tell his son about Miss Stuart's telegram to Bushire. But to this news Thorley made no response whatever, not so much as by the flicker of an eyelash. Then Mr. Prescott decided that he had done his duty for that day and took up a book.

It was not until they were riding down to Muramna next morning that he found courage to unburden himself of a message.

"Thorley," he ventured, breaking a silence that was like the surface of a pond after several still nights of zero weather, "Thorley, I have a message for you."

Supposing the message was from Mrs. Prescott, Thorley said nothing, and did not even turn his head.

"Miss Stuart," instantly Thorley was all attention, "asked me to tell you that she would be pleased if you cared to come and tell her about the decision at Station meeting to-day."

"Great Scott, Father, why didn't you mention that before?"

"Your attitude, my son, has not been receptive. I have hesitated to address you at all."

Thorley came close enough to reach out and touch his father's shoulder.

"I know I'm a brute, Dad," he admitted, "but I didn't realize that I was quite as bad as that."

"All right, Samivel my son, we'll say no more about it. I know you have many things to trouble you."

"But so have we all. How will it turn to-day, Father? Who's on our side?" And for the rest of the way the two men talked busily about the coming discussion.

That afternoon, it seemed to Jean Stuart as if the Station meeting were interminably long. She sat in the Lawrences' sitting-room, sewing; for she could not collect her thoughts to read nor to study. She was inclined to fear that she had done wrong in sending for Thorley Prescott. There was truth in the excuse she had made through his father, of wanting to hear from Thorley's own lips about the work at Akbar. She was deeply and honestly interested in the water-pipe industry; for her intellect had long since grasped the economic value of such schemes in the development of backward countries like Persia; and her desire had been unconsciously developed for changing the miserable environments of fellow human beings into those of health and happiness.

Yet these were days when her fear of meeting the Black Saib was so great that she would rather have gleaned the details of this decision from Margaret Lawrence and the others, than to have risked meeting this man, face to face, with the knowledge that each of them knew the other's heart and that it would be impossible for her ever to allow another word or glance of love to pass between them.

She had summoned Thorley, she told herself (and with her soul-communion had become a fairly honest process) because it was necessary for some one to warn him as forcibly as possible against the daily and hourly hazards he was taking.

He was being watched over by the Kurdish Chief Ismaili; for the Sheikh had taken a great fancy to his "Brother the Black Saib" and was determined, at all costs, to save his life. Besides, there was an ancient feud between the tribesmen of the Sheikh and the adherents of Hadji Husain. The Sheikh had shown his devotion and his desire for revenge by sticking to Thorley Prescott and by delegating two of his sons to fetch their mother from the stronghold near Suj Anak and bring her to Dr. MacColl at the Hospital. Jean had heard from Dr. MacColl only yesterday that there might be a chance of saving the Kurdish woman's life.

Jean Stuart found herself thinking of many things as she sat there, forever plying her needle, with her gaze wandering to the window so often that her fingers were pricked.

The side window of the sitting-room looked toward the Seminary. Through the windows of the assembly room, her keen eyes could discern black forms. Once a man came and pulled back the curtain with an impatient jerk; and she was certain that she recognized his shining black head.

At last there was a sound that reached her through the silence way across the Compound. It was as if some one had jumped from a great height on to flag-stones.

The next instant the outer door of the Seminary burst open; and a hatless, square-shouldered man flew across the yard. Even before she could see him, she knew he was coming and smiled at her own inconsistency even as she shrank back into the room. Then with a decisive movement that expressed her self-contempt, she threw the window open, and called out:—

"Well, how is it? Have we won?"

Thorley, lifting his face, halted directly under the window; and she was amazed to see that his eyes were wet with tears, some of which had made a pale furrow down his swarthy cheeks. Evidently he had taken no trouble to conceal them nor to wipe them away. His voice however rang out strong and vibrant as he answered:—

"No Jean, we haven't won; it's Dan who has done it all for us."

"What?" cried Jean. "Come in quickly!" And she ran to open the door. "Now tell me all about it," she demanded.

Thorley Prescott sat down by accident opposite a little mirror into which his glance unavoidably fell.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I've been crying!" He fumbled hurriedly in his pocket.

"Got a handkerchief, Jean?" he demanded; and Jean, stupefied with astonishment, obediently tucked one into his hand.

"Well," he began, mopping his face and shifting his chair impatiently to get that mirror out of his way—"Well, I never would have expected such a thing!—Never in all this world!"

"Neither should I," answered Jean, dryly. "Suppose you expatiate."

"I'll tell you the whole thing from the beginning." Thorley's eyes gleamed with enthusiasm. "Sit here, won't you please, so that I can see the sun sparkle in your hair. Was there ever any other hair like yours?"

"I doubt it," said Jean. "It was shampooed yesterday, and there's nothing half as wayward even in Muramna. Now, if you don't go on, I shall excuse myself and go in search of Mr. Freyer — or Roger Standish."

"By the way," Prescott's face lit up with mischief, "has Amy Lea told you of her engagement? She seemed to think that you were opposed to the match."

Jean's eyes responded to his look, the little places that were not exactly dimples deepening at the corners of her mouth.

"Oh! well," she said, "I fancy I'm not the only person in Muramna who will be glad when Jean Stuart sets out for home." Thorley's face changed instantly to grimness; his eyes hardened and met hers in a silent challenge which, after a moment of intense effort, she failed to meet. The instant she turned away, Thorley's face changed again; but that brief look of ineffable tenderness was lost on her. He began to speak now in brisk businesslike tones:—

"You want me to tell you about the meeting! Well, Dr. Lawrence had asked my father to take the chair. Of course that cut Dad out of the discussion, which looked bad for us. Dr. Franklin made as decent a prayer as I ever

heard, mostly asking the Lord for common sense, which Heaven knows we all need."

Jean laughed. "It might be safe for even me," she said, "to make a prayer like that."

He nodded. "You've begun, have you? I thought so. Have you got as far as 'forgive us our debts'?"

"No," she answered in a high voice, "that's a point I will never reach."

Thorley regarded her an instant before he went on. "Well, your friend Freyer was the first to shoot off his mouth. You know the kind of thing he would say; a lot of stuff about shovels being turned into ploughshares and water-pipes into pruning-hooks. One time, he said, he himself had felt it his duty cheerfully to 'leave the word of the Lord and serve tables.' But that time had long since passed." Jean could scarcely keep from laughing at Thorley's unconscious imitation of his troublesome little colleague. "He finished by making a motion that the work at Akbar be immediately concluded and that Mr. Thorley Prescott (with a lot of hot air about me) be now permitted to resume his chosen work in the city." Thorley laughed, but without a touch of his old bitterness.

"Did anybody second the motion?" asked Jean.

"Yes — Roger Standish, with an alacrity that made me nearly roar."

"You didn't laugh out loud?"

"I did that."

"I wager that made the old ladies sit up." Jean longed to add a specific question about the effect on Mrs. Prescott, but restrained herself. "What happened next?" she demanded. "It's easier to get rid of a third molar than to extract a consecutive tale from you."

"Sorry," answered Thorley with a chuckle. "It might help if you called me Thorny."

Jean's face grew stern as she answered, "Go on."

"Well, Aunt Kate was the next to make a speech. I tell you it takes that dear soul to make a fellow feel that he's accomplishing something! If all women were like her!" Jean's eyes flashed. "Can't you keep to the subject?"

she demanded.

Thorley stared at her in amazement while he hastily obeyed. "The next person to get the floor was old Dad himself. He gave up his chair to Dr. Franklin; and I wish you could have heard how the dear old fellow delivered his ideas. It was simply bully!"

"He makes the clearest speech of any man here," Jean

put in.

"Oh, well," Thorley beamed with contradictory pride as he spoke, "he's nothing, you know, but a mossback missionary." Thorley was playing for that queer little sound of deep merriment which had given him his first knowledge that he liked to be with Jean Stuart. For some weeks he had been able to congratulate himself that when he played for it, he won it. Now he was congratulating himself, even as he rapidly gave the substance of his father's speech.

Mr. John Prescott, it appeared, had offered a detailed plan for the adjustment of work among his colleagues, so that Thorley could keep on at Akbar without interfering with the necessary work of the Station, or forcing overwork upon any one person. Thorley, he claimed, could leave the water-pipe industry largely to Isaac of Arawan, his well-trained foreman. At least half his time could thus be spent in the Treasury, where, when he was obliged to be absent, Mr. John Prescott himself would be ready to help him out. This would leave Roger Standish and Mr. Freyer free to start for the Mountains as soon as instructions came from the Board, because Miss Trench, whose Moslem girls were taking a vacation on account of Moharrem, had herself offered the use of her gifted pen in assisting Dr. Lawrence with the Press work. "Dad brought down the house,"

Thorley remarked, with a twinkle in his eye, "by adding that in his opinion this arrangement of the work would be advantageous to the natives, as he had never thought that the talents of his son were such as to fit him for editing a religious periodical."

Jean hardly took time to laugh as Thorley expected. "Well, what next?" she insisted. "Was that all your father said?"

"No. He finished up with a splendid peroration about the industrial factor in missions. 'Every missionary,' he said, 'is a spoke in the wheel of progress toward Christian civilization. Now, in a country like this, no Christian civilization can be built up, except on a basis of economic reform. If we can begin to educate these people in the foundation principles of honesty as a result of scientific and profitable labor, if we can wrest from the Persian Government proper protection for the workmen under our employ. that they may be permitted to labor without fear, and to amass profits and property without molestation, then, if we can build up in them the civic responsibility which should be felt by men of property as citizens and patriots, we shall be the pioneers of a mighty, far reaching, and purely Christlike work.'" Thorley's face shone as he finished; and Tean said softly, -

"You seem to have learned it all by heart. Did you write it for him?"

"Could I have made a speech like that?"

Jean smiled. "I guess you could, if necessary." Then, as he shook his head, "Who came next?"

"Our friend, the principal of Faith Seminary, with her Commencement voice, and her hands folded just so, immediately over her discreet waist-line."

Jean rippled. "Talk about not being able to talk!" she murmured; but Thorley pretended not to hear her.

"Of course, we realized that a speech from the old lady

would influence at least two votes. She quoted Scripture copiously and very much to the point. You can't say much against that verse about the 'meat that perisheth,' when it's cleverly used. She's more consistent and has better arguments than any other of the evangelical party. Of course no one wanted to answer her. Mrs. Prescott was perfectly delighted; Mrs. Whiting purred with approval; and Amy Lea looked so soulful that I wished she was a man, so that I could punch her face."

"What about Roger?" asked Jean mischievously.

"Oh, well, the kid is really on the fence, though he doesn't know it. When it comes to the point, he's not too well pleased that there isn't some pressing duty to keep him in the city. I guess he's anchored, all right. Anyway, he always looks at her — when you're not there."

"I thought your mind never wandered."

"It doesn't . . . now."

"Who spoke next?" The words came like hail.

"Why, dear old Dr. Lawrence pulled himself out of his chair."

"No!" exclaimed Jean. "I shouldn't have thought he could do it. It's been so hard lately for him to say anything . . . consecutive."

"Well, he did it this time . . . answered Scripture with Scripture in a way I've never heard equalled. The same Lord, he said, that spoke about the meat which perisheth, said also to his chosen disciples, 'Give ye them to eat.' He called me 'our young Nehemiah.' Said I might well say to certain of my colleagues, in the spirit of my great missionary predecessor, 'This is a great work; I cannot leave it and come down.' Dr. Franklin yelled, 'Hear! Hear!' and that confused the old gentleman so, he sat down. Of course, the doctor had to speak then; but about all he did was to spit out a few words about ignorant interference and the wonderful hope of a self-supporting mission, if

they let me go on a little longer on my own hook. After he had sat down, he jumped up again and blurted out a call for objections. You can guess who rose to it?"

Jean answered him with her eyes.

"Well, my respected stepmother succeeded in making me pretty mad. She seldom pulls it off lately."

"Yes, you are calming down."

"I find it bothers Dad when I answer back; and after all, I have other uses for my breath. But this time she talked about one missionary family whose members, she understood, were likely soon to be splashing in porcelain bath-tubs."

Jean threw back her head and laughed merrily. "Oh," she cried, "you don't mean to say that you lost the fun in that?"

"Hardly. This is what got me. She claimed we ought to be using your money to erect a suitable church in the city! Well you can just bet that I was up before her knees were bent to sit down; but your friend Dr. MacColl got the recognition of the chair."

"I guess she did."

"It was all right, too. There's nobody equal to Dr. MacColl for laying out a contemporary when she feels so inclined. She said the thousand dollars and all that had since been added to it (the exact sum she had never reckoned up and doubted whether it were realized even by the giver) this princely gift had been given by one friend of the Mission, Miss Jean Stuart, for the water-works at Akbar and for no other purpose. Those who would like to divert it into the building of a church edifice, might as rightfully lay hold in imagination on the Crown revenues of England."

"Well, well," laughed Jean, "the little doctor did express herself."

"George Whiting," continued Thorley, "had been

prodded by his wife and glared at by Mrs. Prescott the entire afternoon. He now got up and made some remarks about the danger to me. Well, I disposed of 'em."

"Did you make a speech?"

"No, I just put it to 'em that if we stopped the work now, the natives would think it was all a bluff, and next time they wanted food, they'd expect food and nothing else. Then I said I thought we better not be quitters and sat down. One or two of them clapped a little, and Dr. Franklin pounded with his feet; but I knew at least half of them were against us; so I moved the previous question. No use to prolong it. I thought they weren't open to argument. The question was put."

"Let's see; what was the question? Mr. Freyer had moved that the industry at Akbar be abandoned and that you be sent back to the Treasury and the Press."

"That's right. Dad put it; and the votes were seven to seven."

"That made it embarrassing for your father. I suppose he had to cast the deciding vote."

"Now here," said Thorley, "is the best part. Margaret Lawrence got up and read an unfinished letter of Dan's to the Board — a letter about my work, about the criticisms on it from home, and about his judgment as to whether it should go on. He had evidently written it, not in any official way, but because he felt so strongly about the matter that he could not rest without making it clear to the Board just where he stood."

Jean's voice was hushed with wonderment.

"And Dan's widow had the courage so soon to get up and read that letter?"

"I don't believe she minded it. Her voice didn't even tremble."

Jean regarded him with pity. All she said was a long-drawn "Oh . . , h," but something in her expression

brought back to Thorley Prescott the look on Margaret Lawrence's face as she had sat down, after reading Dan's letter, and he fell into a deep silence, which was shared by Jean. It was she who broke it at last,—

"I would like to know how it all came out."

"Oh, yes... George Whiting got up and said unless the motion could properly be declared lost by accepting this letter as the casting vote, he should ask that the rules be suspended and that he himself be allowed to change to the other side. He said he had always relied implicitly on Dan's judgment in practical matters and he felt that Dan's opinion on this occasion should carry as much weight with his colleagues as if Dan himself had been present in body."

"How did Mrs. Whiting like that?"

"She was crying hard. I guess nobody's eyes were very dry."

"Your stepmother?" Jean could not resist saying.

"Well, she might not admit it; but I think she'll have to hang my socks back of the stove, before she puts them in my bureau drawer."

"No!" said Jean with awe.

"Then came the surprise of my life. Mr. Freyer got up and said that if a motion were in order, he would like to move that the work at Akbar be continued with Mr. Thorley Prescott at its head, and that representations be made to the Board that the entire Mission Station at Muramna felt it essential that the industrial feature in modern missionary life be given a thorough trial in Muramna Station.

"When he sat down," Thorley smiled gravely, "I felt for the first time in my life that perhaps it may sometimes be necessary for a person with a feeble body to faint from shock.

"Well, I guess that's all," he added, rising, "and come to

think of it, Jean, I'd better hurry back. My first thought was of you; and I haven't thanked her yet."

"Well," said Jean, "you're an ungrateful wretch," but she held out her hand to him and he, in the joy of snatching at it, might have kissed it, if she had not quickly pulled it away.

CHAPTER XL

JEAN STUART JOINS THE FUN

THORLEY PRESCOTT, with a quick feeling of remorse, turned away from his heart's delight, to go and do his duty. He opened the door of the sitting-room and was surprised to find the little hall full of people whose forms he could not distinguish in the dimness. The voice of Margaret Lawrence was the one he first recognized. She was saying:—

"Come right in here, my dear. It is so nice to see you again! Or would you rather go upstairs?"

"No, thank you," said another voice, thin and rather weak, but with a crispness of enunciation that fitted well with its New England accent. "No, thank you, I'd rather visit in the sitting-room for a minute. You know you really haven't room for me; and I am going to ask one of the College people to give me a corner."

At the first sound of this new voice, Thorley Prescott, with his heart turning over, had backed in through the sitting-room door. Jean Stuart, amazed at this kind of entrance, hastened to get a view of his face and read there a fact that caused her to wish for a quick way of escape; but the sitting-room had only one egress and that, by this time, was stopped by a bevy of ladies, among whom was Margaret Lawrence, holding by the arm a thin, pale little woman whose figure drooped with weariness but was held rigid, and whose clothes, shabby and journey-worn as they were, nevertheless bore an air of precision and exquisite neatness.

"Oh-h-h!" said Jean, and with one more glance at Thorley's profile, she retreated a step or two and stood with her back against the outer wall between the two side windows.

"Oh, Jean," called Margaret, "I'm so glad you're at home. The British Consul has just arrived from Tabriz and he has done us all a favor by bringing with him Miss Esther Wilcox. Esther, this is Miss Jean Stuart of whom you have heard so much."

Thorley, turning with his back to the front window, stood and watched the two women as they shook hands.

Miss Wilcox was the first to speak.

"I have, indeed, heard of Miss Stuart," she said. "It was partly in the hope of relieving her, that I ventured to insist on being brought back at this time by Mr. Hitherington." Turning to Margaret, she added, "He said it was no time for a woman to travel."

"I agree with him perfectly," announced Thorley Prescott.

Miss Wilcox gave a little jump which might have meant that she was now aware for the first time of Thorley's presence.

"Ah!" she said, holding out her hand, "How do you do?"
"Very well, thank you." Then, after a perceptible hesitation, "I hope . . . you did not find the journey too . . . trying."

"Oh, well, you know," broke in a hearty English voice, "Miss Wilcox is a dead game sport. Isn't that what you Americans say when you wish to pay the highest possible compliment? I really was annoyed, rather, when Dr. Tabor asked me to escort an American lady and a native Bible woman, you know; but on my honor I hope you'll believe me when I say that really I rather enjoyed it; gave me a chance to speak something besides this bally Turkish, don't you know?"

Two people who might perhaps, at another time, have

found something to smile at in these remarks, had now found only the courage to face each other and had in consequence heard nothing from the Englishman but a confused murmur of sound. The lady for whose ears the compliment was meant, stood deaf and insensible except to the visual image of the two pale faces confronting each other. To put it plainly, Esther Wilcox was reading the thoughts that were passing between her fiancé and Jean Stuart.

Now the raucous tones of Mrs. Prescott broke the momentary stillness that had followed Mr. Hitherington's speech:—

"Thorley, you are going back to the mountain, I infer. Remember, if you please, that it is your duty not to alarm us by lingering until the darkness. Miss Wilcox, you will come and pass the night with us. My son's room is quite at your disposal."

Before Miss Wilcox had even thought what to say, Thorley answered in tones that were evidently meant to express politeness,—

"I'm sorry, but I shall need my room to-night."

"Miss Wilcox," broke in Jean Stuart, "will have a much nicer one."

Mrs. Prescott snorted.

"Nicer," continued Jean, "because one's own room is always to be preferred to any other." She had walked over into the bevy of ladies and singled out Dr. MacColl whose arm she now clutched. "You know I'm to spend the night with you. When did you say we had better be starting? I'll go and collect my things; for I'm certain you're impatient to be getting back. How's the 'Chieftainess'?"

"The Chieftess, you mean," snapped Dr. MacColl, who had not yet fathomed the situation. She was always a trifle tart in her remarks when she had reason to suspect herself of a bit of unperspicacity.

"Oh well, you can tell me about her on the way out."

Jean managed to laugh rather naturally. "Good night all," she called as she left the room. "Miss Wilcox, I hope your sleep will be as sweet as mine was on the night when I first slept in your room."

Miss Wilcox went out into the hall and spoke from the bottom of the stairs which Jean was climbing.

"Please remember that I consider the room yours," she said rather incisively; and Mrs. Lawrence wondered later how it was that Esther Wilcox came that night to be sleeping in Ruth's little bed instead of in her own old quarters. Ruth, for the last few nights, had gone back to sleeping with her mother. The child woke often in the darkness, and always with a frightened cry; but it was only since Jean Stuart had decided to leave Muramna that Margaret Lawrence had yielded to the comfort of having her daughter's little body within reach, through the long anxious nights.

Dr. MacColl and Jean Stuart, meanwhile, were spending a quiet evening. Jean had been with the Doctor to see the wife of the Kurdish Chief, Ismaili. She had gone the rounds then of all the hospital wards where women and children were lying in comfort and cleanliness.

"It is nice," Jean admitted, "to see them well cared for. I wish we had room for millions more."

The doctor smiled. Then her face turned grave, and her eyes went quickly to the cheap little bookcase with glass doors that distorted her leather-bound treasures within. Jean followed the direction of the doctor's eyes.

"Listen!" she cried, "will you take three thousand dollars for those books of yours?"

"What?" cried the doctor. "Now?"

"Yes," said Jean. "I'll give you my check on the Bank of Persia, if you will sign a receipt in full."

The doctor, whose keen eyes had been fastened on Jean, now fell into a short silence during which she steadily looked through the glass doors of the bookcase, until her bright eyes were so full that she suddenly felt it wise to shut them, murmuring something about soot which, by the way, is an article unknown in Persia because all the fires are made of wood or peat. The doctor, having a strong stomach, was able to stand the smell of native fuel, and thus saved a large proportion of the money which her more delicate colleagues were obliged to spend for wood.

"Don't do it unless you want to," Jean murmured.

"Yes, yes," snapped the doctor, "I'd rather you'd have 'em. I guess you know that I've never had a minute's comfort, since you told me about that English Earl. You know well enough the dear old things would go to Christie's sooner or later, if you didn't take 'em off my hands. I like to think they'll be in the library of my father's friend."

"Don't you mean your father's friend's grandchild?"

"Same thing. Same thing." The doctor's voice was impatient. "Come, where's that check? I'd like to get it over. There's just one stipulation I have to make. The books must be moved before to-morrow night. I don't want to see 'em again."

Jean rose and got out the little bag which she had brought with her to the College. From one of its pockets she took a signed check and another paper which she held in her hand, as the doctor, seizing upon the check, read it through and openly gloated over the good round figures that represented three thousand tomans in gold (rather over three thousand dollars).

"Here's the receipt," said Jean.

The doctor took it impatiently. "You are a business woman!" she said.

Jean nodded. "Well, you yourself were rather avid about that check. Here, read the receipt through, before you sign it."

"Stuff and nonsense!" sputtered the doctor. "I've

stood about all I can from you." And, very much put about, she drew a modern black implement from her old-fashioned pocket, and undertook to sign her name with the end of her clinical thermometer.

Then Jean's merriest peal of laughter rang through the room.

"Oh, come," she said, "don't be so cross. I... want... you... to read... that... receipt."

The doctor paused to get out the glasses which she sometimes remembered to wear when she read. Adjusting them deliberately, she peered at the receipt. Then suddenly and without warning, she burst into tears and flung her arms around Jean Stuart.

"Oh, Jeanie," she cried, "do you mean it? Are you going to give us that money for the Hospital? And must I really promise to keep those books until I die?"

Jean sat down and drew the stanch little doctor into her arms. Her own eyes were dry; but it was a comfort to feel on her bosom the warmth of those grateful tears. At last the doctor looked up.

"Well, I guess," she said — not without a sniffle, "that I'll have to sign; only I must stipulate that the word 'imitation' be inserted before the word 'mahogany' in your description of the bookcase; or else I'm afraid the paper wouldn't be legal; and," she added, shaking her fountain pen (a privilege very properly enjoyed by those who walk on mud floors) "I must be allowed, Jeanie, for once in my life to take my woman's privilege of saying 'I told you so.' I knew Thanksgiving Day, as soon as I laid eyes on you, that sooner or later you'd be joining our fun."

"Pshaw!" said Jean, "you needn't lay claim to any cleverness. You know very well whose fault it is."

"What!" exclaimed the doctor, glancing at her queerly.

"You took an unfair advantage," Jean replied, with a look in her eyes, which no one had ever seen before. "Don't

attempt to deny that you began praying for me that very night."

The doctor gazed at her with reverent amazement.

"There's one thing, though," added Jean, "that even your prayers can never do."

"Perhaps not," admitted the doctor. "The prayers even of our dearest friends sometimes seem to fail; but it's then that the Lord has to set us praying for ourselves."

CHAPTER XLI

WOMAN TO WOMAN

THE Tuesday session of Jean Stuart's little school was almost at an end. Edith Franklin with much hesitation was reciting a proposition in Geometry. Edward was getting ready to pounce on all her mistakes, as soon as she had finished. Mary Freyer, looking dreamily at the blackboard, was making words to her favorite Chopin prelude. Sammy Whiting reading "Treasure Island" behind his Geography, flattered himself that his teacher did not know it. The other children were doing their duty, a wonderful thing, since there were four of them and they had been doing it for at least nineteen minutes.

There came a knock at the door; and Ruth Lawrence, who was monitor for that week, rose to answer it.

"It's Miss Wilcox," she announced. "I guess she's come to visit us, 'cause this used to be *her* school."

"She is very welcome," declared Miss Stuart, stepping down from the platform, "and, children, you may all leave your seats and help me say how glad we are to see Miss Wilcox back."

These words of Jean's were sincere. At the same time, she could not help feeling a little pleased that the eyes of several children turned wistfully to her, even as they greeted her predecessor. Evidently they were glad to kiss Miss Wilcox and welcome her back as a private person. A little too evidently they preferred to keep Miss Stuart as their teacher.

"She is a trifle pursy with them," thought Jean. "I suppose she thinks it necessary; for she really loves them, and she could be an awfully good teacher if she let herself go."

Now Jean decreed that regular work must stop; the best of the pieces must be said; the new books and pictures and flowering plants must be shown; and each child must tell how much progress he had made during the year.

"That's fine," said Miss Wilcox, letting herself go to such an extent that her mouth lost its pursy expression. "I'm so glad you've had such a splendid teacher, and I hope she will stay and teach you just as long as she can."

"We love you, too," said little Harriet Franklin, snuggling into her lap and patting her cheek with a frail little hand.

"And we'd like to have you both for teachers," chimed in Mary Freyer, "only I suppose that would be too much luxury for missionary children."

"Huh," said the irrepressible Sammy, "do you call school a luxury? Gosh, I don't. It's after time, Miss Stuart. Can't we go?"

Miss Wilcox looked to see how her successor would treat this outburst. She herself could not have let the boy's language go unreproved. It had been one of the unsolved problems of her life in Muramna, where that child picked up the words he used so glibly. But Miss Stuart only said:—

"Certainly, Sammy, if you don't care to stay — No, you needn't take any books home with you. We'll suspend all lessons in honor of Miss Wilcox —"

"But, Miss Stuart, there's a book I want to take home." Miss Wilcox marvelled at this, on the part of Sammy, and marvelled still more that Miss Stuart should discourage him.

"Any book, Sammy, that you have been using in school deserves a vacation this afternoon. Good-by."

She dismissed him smilingly; and "Treasure Island" was

unread that night, the schoolroom windows being barred, as they were directly over the wall.

In a short time Mrs. Franklin sent word that dinner was ready. She begged that the two teachers would stay and dine with her. Miss Wilcox had already agreed to stay; and when Miss Stuart tried to beg off, she was detained by force.

After dinner, Miss Wilcox found a chance to say, "Miss Stuart, I wish to have a talk with you. Let's go over to Dr. MacColl's room." She knew as well as Jean that the doctor would be out all the afternoon.

"Dear me," said Miss Stuart, "is it as imminent as all that? I thought you would like to rest a little before you took back your school work. Let me finish out this week and perhaps next week, too. My friends cannot arrive for at least a fortnight, the gentlemen tell me, even if they start at once on receiving my telegram, and travel fast."

"This isn't about the school," said Miss Wilcox.

"How mysterious you sound," said Jean. "Have we friends in common, of whom I do not know?" She hoped she was speaking as lightly as she meant to speak.

Miss Wilcox looked intrepidly up into the gray eyes which began to look defiant as they resolutely met hers.

"Miss Stuart," she said, "I have asked for the privilege of a talk with you. I can write what I have to say, if you prefer it."

Now Jean Stuart would cheerfully have drawn a very large check, if she could have brought herself to snub Miss Wilcox, in her old cheerful and thorough manner. She looked down at the colorless little schoolma'am from South Brambletree, Massachusetts, and after a very long moment, yielded to the request.

The two young women, having said good-by to their hostess, walked off together across the yard, "As ill-matched a pair," thought Mrs. Franklin, watching from the window,

"as I have seen for many a day. It's a good thing for Esther that she isn't in the habit of thinking about herself. I can see that she admires Miss Stuart without an idea of the comparisons that might be made between them!" Yet Mrs. Franklin had a mind-reading faculty that added awe to the affection with which the Persians regarded her.

Jean Stuart was making a nest for her visitor among the cushions of the doctor's lounge. She herself chose a chair whose high back she turned toward the light.

"Now," she said airily, "in the words of Sammy Whiting, 'Fire away."

Miss Wilcox drew herself together with her elbows on her knees and her sharp little chin propped up in both hands. Her brow was wrinkled, and her eyes showed that she was thinking hard; but she did not look at Jean nor speak for several hours (or so it seemed).

Jean got up and went into the bedroom, coming back with gloves of the doctor's which she proceeded to mend. It was impossible for her to sit still any longer; and she was determined not to make a move toward opening the conversation. Miss Wilcox should have it all her own way — now.

At last Miss Wilcox spoke.

"I thought I had planned just what I would say to you; but it's more difficult than I expected. You see I can't tell what is likely to make you listen."

Still Jean was silent.

"Your saying nothing makes me think that you know what I want to discuss. Couldn't you make it a little easier?"

"I am quite at a loss," declared Jean. "You said it was nothing about the school. I could talk about those children all day. Come, let's put off this subject that wrinkles your forehead, and give ourselves over—"

Esther Wilcox held up her hand, rose from the sofa, and stood before Jean Stuart.

"Look at me," she said bluntly and dispassionately. "Do I stand a chance of regaining a man's affection after he has fallen in love with such a woman as you?"

Jean grew scarlet. "What are you accusing me of?" she said, angrily.

"Of nothing," said the other slowly. "I'm simply asking you to see that I'm not a fool. How could I expect now to recover the allegiance of Th-"

Jean Stuart interrupted her, speaking hurriedly with a formal smile that was intended to be gracious. "If I had dreamed that you were ready to talk with me about your engagement I should have wasted no time before proffering my good wishes. When I saw you with Mr. Prescott yesterday, I knew at once that you were his fiancée."

"I was his fiancée. To-day Mr. Prescott is not engaged."
"I am very sorry. I told Mr. Prescott yesterday that I considered him most fortunate in possessing your love."

"I know you did," said Miss Wilcox, a painful flush rising in her pale cheeks. "He said you begged him to stick to me." There was a little pause, while Jean speechlessly wondered what else he had said about her. "Mr. Prescott was honest enough," continued Miss Wilcox, "not to say that he would like to do so. He told me plainly that he loves you. Even before he said that, I had given him his freedom. I came back to Muramna, in fact, prepared to break the engagement. I should have done so, of course, long ago, had I ever received the letter he wrote me in the winter. You were entirely right about that being lost."

Jean started. "He told you that?" she gasped.

"Yes, I was grateful to you for understanding me so quickly. That made me know I could talk with you." Jean tried to interrupt but was stopped by a determined gesture. "I should be miserable if I knew that because of my selfishness Thorley was missing — everything. He loves you," the words went rushing on in spite of Jean, "as

he never dreamt of loving me. He was just horribly lonely, that was all; and I made it a little easier for the time being. You aren't going to let it spoil his life, are you, because I once had just a little bit of him? You know that now he belongs every atom to you."

Jean moved impatiently. "My dear," she said, "you are as kind and good as you can be; but you are talking nonsense. I couldn't marry this man, even if I loved him."

"You do love him," said the girl, her voice suddenly deepening. "You love him as you will never love again."

"He told you so?" The words were biting.

"Not one word passed between Thorley and me about your feeling for him."

"Yet you say I love him? Who is your informant?"

"Yourself. You told it to me yesterday."

"I'm afraid you have a vivid imagination," said Jean. "What made you think — as you did?"

"Ah, you can't even say it, don't you see? And yesterday when he first came in, before you knew that I was the other girl, when you had forgotten me in fact, your eyes answered his for just a second."

"Except to a jealous woman --"

Esther held up her hand and went on speaking fast and quietly.

"And then, when you knew who I was, you left the room and the house as soon as you could, and when you left, your eyes searched my face, but you never even glanced at him."

"Do you call that love? How do you know I wasn't flirting?"

"Don't lie to me, please," said Miss Wilcox. "In purpose you are lying," as Jeanmade an angry gesture. "Would you care to remember this denial, if word were brought tomorrow that Thorley Prescott had been killed?"

"Are you putting me to the torture?" asked Jean, with

a queer smile on her white lips. "You know that I am to blame for the enmity of Hadji Husain."

"Ah, forgive me," cried the other. "I'm afraid I'm forgetting everything in the desire to win my cause."

"Your cause! Then why don't you imitate me and Sammy Whiting, and 'shinny on your own side'? I'm going away in less than three weeks. During that time," she smiled crookedly, "I promise you not to see him again. And afterward,—" She paused, and by a supreme effort summoned to her face the shadow of her own smile. Her tone was confidential and very friendly as she added, "You must tell me what I am to send you from New York. Shall it be silver, or the wedding gown—or both?"

"Oh don't, don't, don't!" cried Esther, covering her face and bursting into tears. "Can't you see it's his happiness I'm fighting for? The words came out between sobs, and at the last she threw herself downward among the cushions, trying to stifle the telltale sounds that mortified her to the quick of her New England soul.

"For Heaven's sake, stop crying," commanded Jean, suddenly irritated past endurance. "His happiness depends on you alone."

"There's so much more that I must tell you and — I — can't — now."

The depth of her sobs began to alarm Jean; for it seemed as if they would tear the frail body. Jean, like some men, became angry when a woman cried. She seldom did it herself. Now suddenly there came to her a picture of herself crying against the white pickets of the cemetery gate up at Akbar, and of Thorley Prescott standing patiently with his back turned, waiting for her to finish. She went meekly out to the little kitchen and got a glass of water; but Esther's thin little hand motioned her away.

"Please go into the bedroom just a minute," pled the girl. "Before we talk again I must—"

Jean thought it was obvious what the other must do. She left the water and a clean handkerchief. Then she disappeared, wishing the next moment that she could be rude enough to climb out of the bedroom window; for there was no other way of escape now, except through the sitting-room.

She shook her head and almost smiled as she thought of her long body dangling from the doctor's window and the horrified faces of the natives staring at her from behind the hospital blinds! It flitted through her mind that in all Muramna only Sammy Whiting would sympathize with such a performance. Then it came to her that there was one other. Instantly his strong figure stood before her mind. She saw that lenient look in his eyes—a look, she believed, reserved for her alone. Jean Stuart clenched her hands and began to pace the floor, but quietly, lest that woman in the other room should hear her.

CHAPTER XLII

ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Esther was no longer sobbing. A silence followed, which Jean felt through the wall, more painfully than she had felt the sound of grief. In the pause her soul writhed as Esther's body had writhed among the pillows. Jean Stuart had always been a proud woman. She had held herself above the petty failings which degraded the majority of the human race. Faults, she admitted in her nature, but they were faults which she felt to be almost ennobling. Pride was one of them: pride of family, pride of her own good breeding, pride that made it easy and delightful to give and almost impossible to accept what meant sacrifice to the giver. Another fault in which she gloried, was the power of deep and lasting resentment.

Jean Stuart had once received an injury. She had never forgiven the man who had inflicted it. He had been engaged to her. One month before the day set for the wedding, she had found him making love to her sister. She had made arrangements at once to have Delia marry him. She had smoothed Delia's way with her father and had succeeded in making even him believe that she was glad to be the maid-of-honor, rather than the bride. And so she had been glad, with a fierce joy, exulting in her escape from such a man, lusting for the day when she should make him suffer.

Toward her sister she had no such resentment. She only despised the poor thing. Jean had found it easy enough to be good to Delia, even to nurse her when, after the birth of

her only child, she had become an invalid. Delia had so abjectly needed Jean. She had dared at last, to send and beg for her sister, though the husband said Jean would never humble herself to come. Delia had told Jean his very words, and they were one more count against him. For a whole year, Jean had lived in his house (which after all was Delia's), loathing him but seeing, thank Heaven, very little of him. Then Delia had died, leaving little Mary to Jean. She marvelled at the time that the husband should behave so decently about the funeral, about Mary, almost, it seemed then, about the money. He showed what seemed even to her, like real grief; he was a pretty good imitation of a man. She was even grateful to him for giving her Mary; but she never ceased for one instant to hate him

Another year passed by. Mary and she were perfectly happy together. Jean had come in those last months to tolerate Delia's weaknesses, but she could not miss her. Nor apparently did the child. Delia had been a feeble mother as well as a disloyal sister.

Mary's father came sometimes to see the child; and Jean, while she still nourished that old hatred, began almost to tolerate the man who had been the cause of it. Then he proposed to her. When she indignantly refused him, he made it clear that he thought she had been caring for him all those years. Then the old hatred combined with a new fury of uncontrolled rage; and there was an explosion. The man who had been impervious all these years to unspoken contempt, took fire at Jean's first word. His vanity was wounded. It was his turn to hate; and his chance for revenge was immediate. He took Mary away from Jean. And then Mary died.

We who have known what grief is, when felt by an unforgiving heart, we can understand why Jean Stuart felt that she must escape herself, if she had to run to the very edge of the world. And we know how it was with her heart, when, after running all those miles through untold dangers, she finally reached the edge and sat down again to see if her burden had been left behind.

Now other burdens had been added — burdens for other people on whom her presence had brought sorrow. Margaret Lawrence. She winced at the thought. And Esther!

"Oh, God," Jean Stuart sat down and buried her face in her hands. "Oh, God, if there is a God, why did you let that good man die? And why, oh why, have you let me disgrace myself? I couldn't help it. I didn't mean to. Oh, if I could have been the one to die; for I can't bear to live and hate myself."

And then it came to her with a sudden awful vividness that she, Jean Stuart, was going home to punish a man by taking away his money. She, Jean Stuart, was still lusting after all these years, to take revenge on Mercer Bryant. And yet what had she done? She had caused the death of a noble man. She had robbed Margaret of her husband. She had not meant to hurt any one, that was true. Had Delia meant to hurt her, Delia who could not bear to see a mouse in pain?

And now how was it all ending, all that pride in her own strength and faithfulness? She, Jean Stuart, who despised her dead sister Delia, had stolen away the love of a man who was pledged to another woman and had let him know that she loved him. And here was the other woman offering him to her as she had offered Mercer Bryant to Delia.

Jean was walking up and down the room again. Presently she was kneeling at the bed and her hands were clutching at her head. Not one sound came from her set lips; but her soul was groaning and sobbing as if it would tear its way out of her body.

Then the door opened quietly and Esther Wilcox came into the room. "Are you praying?" she asked gently.

"That's what I've been doing. Perhaps if we prayed together, the Lord would show us both, just what He wants."

Jean, as she hastily rose to face the invader, heard only the one word. "Praying!" she said with a sneer. "I praying!"

Her look was so terrible that Esther began to tremble.

Jean Stuart darted across the room and took the smaller woman by the shoulders.

"Look here," she said, "I know what hate is. You don't. I have hated a man for seven years because he turned from me to another woman. I despised my own sister until she died, and after. Do you suppose I'm going to let any woman despise me!"

Esther gently put her cold hands over the hot ones that were gripping her so tightly.

"How could I despise you," she said, "or hate—anybody else?"

"How could you help it? I couldn't. I didn't want to."

"Yes, that's just it. I do want to."

"I don't see why you should. I don't. I shall go on hating through all eternity. And so will you — even now — even if I go away — and you are married to him — you'll hate me — and it will be *right*."

Esther Wilcox gazed steadily into the wild eyes so full of misery.

"I loathe myself," whispered Jean Stuart, just above her breath.

"Miss Stuart," said Esther Wilcox quietly, "you've been living with Margaret Lawrence and Dr. Lawrence. Have you seen from either of them, any sign of resentment toward Hadji Husain?"

"No," said Jean. Her form relaxed. Her eyes looked less wild. There came into them the puzzled look which was often in them these days, when they looked at Margaret. "Have I hurt you?" she added quickly, feeling for the first time the tension of her hands.

"Sit down. You are trembling," said Esther.

"No, let's stand just so."

"Why is it that Margaret can forgive when you could not?"

"Forgive! You think she has forgiven him."

"Don't you?"

"I — suppose — so." The words came very slowly.

"Have you heard her say the Lord's Prayer since Dan was killed?"

"Ves."

"Does she say 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors'?"

"Yes."

"If you were Margaret, would you feel safe in asking the Lord to forgive you as she has forgiven the Hadji?"

"I never thought of that."

"You say I shall never forgive you — nor Thorley."

Esther paused, and a smile shone from her pale face, making it suddenly very beautiful.

"Oh, Jean," she cried, "don't you see? I am a Christian, too."

CHAPTER XLIII

JEAN IS READY

ALL through the night Jean Stuart kept her vigil. It was a great question that she had to decide and she needed help; but even of her friend, Dr. MacColl, she could not ask it. She was glad that the little lady had consented to let her sleep on a couch in the study. She could not have stayed in the room, that night, with any human being. From experience in Kurdistan she knew that the Doctor was a sound sleeper. So she did not hesitate, when her thoughts became more poignant than she could bear, to get up and pace the floor of the little room. She tried once in a while, to read one of the old books that now belonged in a sense to her; but that she found impossible. Her mind carried her back into the past.

That night Jean Stuart, as in the mind of a drowning man, lived over every moment of her remembered life. It was not until the dawn began to break, that she dared to begin facing the future; and then a very strange experience awaited her:—

Jean Stuart, formerly of New York and Bar Harbor, discovered that she had been forced to forgive her brother-in-law Mercer Bryant. It was a process which she no longer had to dread. She found that somehow, in the crucible of contact with Esther Wilcox, her old hatred had been melted by the fire of understanding, into a great pity.

Jean Stuart had learned to have compassion on her enemy. But the descendant of Grandfather Jonathan had yet to learn the art of accepting forgiveness; and she had far to go before she would be able to forgive herself. When morning broke, Jean with her mind made up, knelt down by the couch, and repeated under her breath the whole of the Lord's Prayer. Then she got into bed and fell asleep.

At breakfast, Jean, under the doctor's keen regard, succeeded in keeping up a fitful merriment. After breakfast the doctor went her rounds, refusing Jean's request to go along.

"You stay here and rest," said the square little woman, opening the door. "If you need work, you can typewrite my notes on that Kurdish Chieftess's case."

"Thank you," said Jean, "I have never used a type-writer."

"Time you learned then. The things are all on the table over there. Good-by."

Jean went to work. Scarcely had she become absorbed in this new chore, when she heard the gate of the Compound swing open and a clatter of horses' hoofs. Perhaps it was the sudden noise after a white night, that made her heart lose a beat. She stopped writing for an instant; then just as she had herself in hand and was finding the next letter. there came on the doctor's door, a thundering knock. Tean, with her heart making up for lost time, went slowly to the door. There on the the step below her, stood the Thunderer with his head already bared, and a most ingratiating smile on his face. Behind him out in the yard she saw, while struggling for a word, the Kurdish Sheikh Ismaili and four of his followers tethering their horses, while Iblis, one of Ismaili's sons, led away the Fiend to the Hospital stable. They had ridden down, as was their custom these days, to guard the Black Saib.

"The doctor's out and I am very busy," began Jean, trying not to open the door any wider; but he was inside

and had almost taken her into his arms, when she, pushing him away with all her might, found breath to say:—

"Go away, Mr. Prescott. What right have you to touch me? Yesterday you were engaged to Esther Wilcox."

"Yesterday," declared Thorley, coming toward her with his arms still out, "is a thousand years away."

Jean put a small rocking-chair between them and stood

her ground.

"To-day," she said firmly, "has scarcely begun; and between you and me, there will be no to-morrow. I want you to go away, and go now. I intend never to see you again. When Robert Courtlandt and his sister come, I shall go home with them; and I will never come back."

"Yes, you will," said Thorley, between his clenched teeth. "If you get away with that fellow, which you won't, if I can help it, I'll come and bring you back."

"You can't leave here," Jean answered.

"I will," said Thorley.

"Then you'll be a coward and a deserter."

Thorley, very white, smiled queerly.

"I'm willing to take that," he said. "Who is this Courtlandt?"

"An old and tried friend."

"Has he asked you to marry him?"

"What concern is that of yours?"

"You know. Has he?"

"Well — yes." She could not help giving the answer, but forced herself when the words had been slowly uttered, to look up and meet his eyes. "And I think I shall marry him," she added, "when we reach New York."

Then the temper of Thorley Prescott got the better of him. Jean stood there quiet, listening until he had finished. He stood before her at last, shaking with spent rage, and silent, because his parched throat could utter no more words.

"What a manly person you are!" Jean's face was red with scorn and her eyes blazed, darker, for the moment, than his.

With the cry of a dog that is spurned by his master, Thorley made blindly for the door. Jean, seeing him go, sank back on the couch and began to sob out his name.

"Oh, Thorley, forgive me," she cried; but even then she uttered no plea for him to come back; and had he turned, she would have had strength, she felt, still to send him away.

Thorley did not turn. A minute later she came to herself at hearing hoof beats. Rushing to the door, she was just in time to see the Fiend galloping through the gate with Thorley hatless and bent over, slapping him on the flank and yelling to the gateman to get out of the way.

Then Jean Stuart was frightened. She, better than anyone else but one, knew the disaster that might come to Thorley if he rode alone. She and the Kurdish Sheikh Ismaili had talked the whole matter over. She knew that Hadji Husain was at large, shadowing Prescott, and that up to this time, he had not struck because the Sheikh had taken care that he could not. She knew that the Sheikh never had let Prescott out of his sight since the day that his sons had brought back the body of Dan Lawrence; and she knew that even now, doubtless, Husain must be watching behind some ambush, which, sooner or later, Thorley Prescott would surely pass.

This flash of thought had not burned out, when, from the stable with a shout the old Sheikh came running.

"Where is he — the Black Saib?" he yelled in Turkish, and Jean answered him:—

"He's gone. Give me a horse quickly. We must ride after him."

"What value is such a woman!" sneered the Sheikh. "Could you not keep him? My son Hamdi has just ridden in to say that Husain is in hiding where the Saib passes to

the river. He came and hid himself just after we had passed this morning, and how he cursed, my son says, at being late! Well, he shall curse again but not more than once." His horse was tethered in front of the Hospital and he was making his preparations and swinging into the saddle, as he spoke. The horse of another Kurd stood near by. Jean Stuart had freed this horse and was in the queer wooden saddle, using the peak as a pommel, ready to start with the Sheikh, though the stirrup was much too short for her.

In his own fierce language, the Sheikh screamed for his tribesmen and, as they issued wildly from the doorways of the stable, he dug the rowels into his stallion and was off at a bound that took him nearly to the gate, Jean after him, patting her horse's neck and talking to him in all the Turkish she could muster. Outside the gate they could see Thorley Prescott already far away. The Sheikh groaned. It was with an uncomplimentary epithet that he told Jean again what he thought of her for not knowing her business as a woman.

"Yes, yes," she answered. "Tell me quickly, will he ride past where the Hadji is? Can't you stop him? If we all shout together he might hear."

She screamed then at the top of her voice, in a way that made her horse lay back his ears and run. The Sheikh screamed too, and his followers who were clattering along behind gave tongue like a pack of hounds; but the Fiend and his rider went on as before.

"There is a shorter way to the ford," gasped the Sheikh, whose breath came harder than that of the young men. "It may be that we can get there first. If so, that dog shall die in time."

"How?" cried Jean. With one hand the Sheikh loosened the dagger at his belt, grasping the hilt with a meaning gesture and the fierce look that had once, not so very long ago, called out an answer of sympathy from the depths of Jean Stuart's heart. In her imperfect Turkish she cried again, because only a cry could be heard above the noise of the horses' hoofs, —

"No, no, you must not. Take him alive; but do not kill him."

"These *Inglesi* women, what fools they are!" muttered the Sheikh. "They would rather their own should die, than be saved by the destruction of such carrion as this Husain."

"It is not we women only," Jean stumbled over the words, but struggled bravely to make them carry her meaning. "Dan Lawrence Saib would never have wanted this man to be killed. His father, Lawrence Mirza would prevent you at any cost from injuring him. . . . The Black Saib himself would rather have him brought to justice in some other way."

"Justice!" sneered the Sheikh. "What is that?"

Jean, saving herself by a miracle from crashing into a broken kariss, desperately went on:—

"Capture him, bind him; take him to your stronghold... There you shall do with him what you will... There the Black Saib shall come and help you dispose of him. Only don't kill him now... It is against the religion of the missionaries to kill men... They will be angry... The Black Saib will spurn you... The little doctor will"... Jean had been going to say that the doctor, in her anger over the killing of the Hadji, might let the Chieftess die!

"I'm a pretty Christian," she muttered to herself.

Then, as the Sheikh, stopping suddenly and motioning her to dismount, led his horse over behind a hummock, she followed him on tiptoe, scarcely daring to breathe, thinking as she went the prayer of the woman who loves, "Oh, God, keep him safe for me."

The Sheikh had drawn his dagger and was already creeping to the top of a little hillock. He had motioned his fol-

lowers to stay behind with the horses; but Jean followed him stealthily, crawling as he did, on hands and knees. When he came to the top of the hillock, he peered over; and Jean could see as she crept alongside, that his eyes took on a deadly glare which she followed to the spot below where there lay, stomach on the ground, a small man in a green turban. As Jean's eyes fell on him, Hadji Husain raised to his shoulder a modern rifle, and sighting carefully, began to settle his finger on the trigger.

Jean's eye followed the direction of the barrel and her heart stopped heating as she saw just coming within range, Thorley Prescott on the Fiend. As she saw them, the Fiend's right hoof went into that broken *kariss* hole. He fell in up to the knees; and Thorley Prescott, riding without thought, rolled over his head and lay on the ground.

Jean had just whispered "Strike" when she heard a gurgle and looking quickly down she saw that the Sheikh's dagger was already buried to the hilt in the left side of Hadji Husain's back.

"He is dead!" hissed the Sheikh, and his eyes met those of Jean Stuart with a triumph that turned her sick. She laid her hand on his arm and spoke rapidly:—

"If you show yourself now, if you allow your followers to show themselves, if you breathe a word of this to any one at the Mission, I will see that the Governor of Muramna has you shot from the mouth of a cannon, and your body exposed in the market place. Do you understand?"

The Sheikh gave no sign.

"Your sons, too — all of them —"

"No, no," gasped the Sheikh, suddenly more unmanned than she had been by the sight of the corpse below them.

"The missionaries are not to know from you," declared Jean. "I will tell them myself when I am ready. It must be enough for you that you have killed your enemy. Will

you agree?" She tore off her gold watch and chain, pressing them into his hands. "For your wife," she said. "She shall have much more than that; and you also."

The Sheikh, though his eyes now gleamed with a different light, gave her back the watch.

"It is enough," he said. "You are the Bride of the Black Saib. It was you who gave the alarm. You wish for his gratitude. To you I give as wedding present, the right to tell when you wish."

As soon as Jean saw that he had complied, she was away; for she had been aware, as she talked with the Sheikh, that Thorley had begun to stir as soon as his body touched the ground, that a moment ago he had picked himself up, and that he was now extricating the Fiend from the kariss. The Fiend, too, was apparently unhurt; and Thorley, looking very dusty but not at all enraged, was almost ready to mount.

Jean, running down from the hillock, snatched at the bridle of a horse, and ran out toward Thorley, calling to him in her naturally clear tones, while the Sheikh hushed up his followers and drew them farther away behind the hummocks, motioning them to throw saddle cloths over the horses' heads.

Thorley turned and, very much astonished, beheld Jean walking toward him. In after years he could never be brought to say that she looked, on that occasion, anything but radiantly beautiful; yet there must have been something queer about her appearance; for, with the helpless astonishment of his regard, there was mingled already a touch of that lenient smile of amusement which he reserved for her.

"What in thunder," he demanded cheerfully, "are you doing here?"

"Oh, Thorley," said Jean, coming close up to him, "I knew you were running into danger, and I"—her eyes fell

before the look that sprang into his; but she lifted them and looked bravely at him — "I just had to ride out and be sure that you were safe."

The Sheikh behind his hummock, remarked to his chief officer:—

"Ah well, these *Inglesi!* When it comes to killing and love, they are very much like us, after all."

Now it was not long before Thorley Prescott, deeply in love as he was, bethought himself that the person of Jean Stuart was by no means safe, even in his embrace. Promptly as the idea struck him, he lifted her on to the back of the Fiend, who, contrary to his former nature, had been standing quite patiently all this time. As he put the reins into her ungloved hand, he bent and kissed it, saying in a tone which his stepmother would have sworn could not be his:—

"Do you want a glove, darling? I have the one that you left at Kazu that day; but you must promise to give it back." As he spoke his left hand went into an inner pocket whence he drew a little tan riding-glove marked "Jouvin."

Jean's other hand found its way down one of those swarthy cheeks which had been made very smooth that morning for her sake.

"No, Thorny," she answered, "I rode here without gloves"—but the rest of the sentence was lost, for she had never called him Thorny except that one other time.

And now they agreed to hurry home; for though Jean knew that the Hadji was dead, she had no mind to linger near those hummocks.

It was hard sometimes, in spite of the great happiness that was growing up in her, to keep her thoughts away from that still, little figure, crowned by a green turban; so she broke the silence which had satisfied Thorley because now he was justified in looking at her again, as much and in the way he wished. But when she spoke, he found himself no less content.

"Whatever shall I do with those Courtlandts?" she sighed in a dismay which she tried to make comic.

"I guess we can head 'em off," laughed Thorley. "I discovered only the other day that they haven't left Bushire."

"What!" exclaimed Jean.

"Your friend, Mrs. Mullins, seems to have a little too much baggage — luggage, I suppose she'd call it." He threw back his head and for the first time in many weeks, laughed heartily. Jean drank in the sound of it; and as it continued, in spite of all her burdens, she could not help joining.

"Oh, Thorley," she cried, "when I think of Bertha Mullins, if she ever hears that I'm going to be a missionary!"

Prescott regarded her with an expression that made his strong face as nearly foolish as it could ever be. Then he was taken with a humorous idea.

"By Jove," he slapped his knee, "but what will Mrs. Prescott say?"

Jean shook her head with an expression of mock seriousness, that lost its mockery all too soon.

"She'll say I'm not worthy; and she'll be right."

"Not worthy!" roared Thorley, slapping his knee with an energy that made the Kurdish horse, tired and lame as he was, stand on his hind legs. "Not worthy, well, by — Thunder! If you're not worthy, who is?"

Jean humbly shook her head, while Thorley leaning toward her, went on, "What do we care what any old Mrs. Prescott says? We know what Mrs. Thorny Prescott will do!"

His eyes rested proudly and lovingly on Jean Stuart, as with joyful awe, she responded,—

"Inshallah."

THE following pages contain advertisements of a few of the Macmillan novels.

NEW MACMILLAN FICTION BY LEADING AUTHORS

Julia France and Her Times

By GERTRUDE ATHERTON, author of "Tower of Ivory," "The Conqueror," etc.

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1,30 net

The scenes of Mrs. Atherton's new novel are laid on Nevis Island, one of the West Indies, and in England, with glimpses of India and San Francisco. The hero of the story is an American, a San Franciscan of the most modern type; the heroine is a study of all that civilization has done for woman up to date.

The Giant Fisher

By MRS, HUBERT BARCLAY, author of "Trevor Lordship."

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.25 net

Mrs. Barclay will be pleasantly remembered for her charming story "Trevor Lordship." Her new book, though English in setting, is very different in character from its predecessor, and reveals the author's versatility both in subject and treatment.

Hieronymus Rides

By ANNA COLEMAN LADD.

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.35 net

Hieronymus, half brother of Emperor Maximilian, soldier, knight, and superior court jester, is the hero of this fine and spirited romance of the Middle Ages. An unusual and wholly delightful departure from the conventional historical novel.

The House of Pride

By JACK LONDON, author of "The Sea Wolf," etc.

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.20 net

Beginning with the title and running through to the last word, every one of the six stories which compose this book grips the reader. Honolulu, Molokai, the leper's island, and others of the Hawaiian group afford splendid settings for the tales.

The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne

By KATHLEEN NORRIS, author of "Mother."

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.25 net; postage extra

A story with a gripping theme, which vividly recalls the author's great success, "Mother."

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishere 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

Joseph in Jeopardy

By "FRANK DANBY" (MRS. JULIA FRANKAU)

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.35 net; postpaid, \$1.45

The New York Tribune says: "This is far and away the best novel that Mrs. Frankau has yet written... certainly a notable one, first of all for its finished workmanship and unflagging interest and, in the second place, on account of its unmistakable purpose."

The New York World says: "The book itself is in many ways remarkable. We prefer it over any previous work from the same pen."

The Friar of Wittenberg

By WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS, author of "A Friend of Cæsar," "God Wills It."

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.35 net; postage extra

In the character of Martin Luther, William Stearns Davis has found admirable material around which to build an historical novel of more than ordinary importance. He has succeeded above all else in making this picturesque figure live, imparting to the stirring episodes in which he played a part so much of reality that the reader is enabled to visualize as never before the conditions leading to the religious revolt of which the Friar of Wittenberg was so powerful a leader.

Van Cleve

By MARY S. WATTS, author of "Nathan Burke," "The Legacy," etc.

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.35 net; postage extra

An up-to-date story, rich in character portrayal, in incident and human appeal, and which will, in all probability, he more popular than either "Nathan Burke," or "The Legacy," two novels which met with such wide favor. The hero, Van Cleve, is a young man who finds himself obliged, at the age of twenty, to support a family of foolish, good-hearted, ill-balanced women, and one shiftless, pompous old man—his grandfather, aunt, cousin, and uncle. Out of this situation the story grows which will be welcome to the many admirers of Mrs. Watts.

The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne

By KATHLEEN NORRIS, author of "Mother."

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.25 net; postage extra

A story with a gripping theme, which vividly recalls the author's great success, "Mother."

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL'S NOVELS

Each, cloth, gilt tops and titles, \$1.50

A Modern Chronicle

Illustrated

This, Mr. Churchill's first great presentation of the Eternal Feminine, is throughout a profound study of a fascinating young American woman. It is frankly a modern love story.

"The most thorough and artistic work the author has yet turned out. A very interesting story and a faithful picture of character . . . one that will give rise to much discussion."—New York Sun.

Mr. Crewe's Career

Illustrated

"It is an honest and fair story.... It is very interesting; and the heroine is a type of woman as fresh, original, and captivating as any that has appeared in American novels for a long time past."— The Outlook.

The Celebrity An Episode

"No such piece of inimitable comedy in a literary way has appeared for years. . . . It is the purest, keenest fun," — Chicago Inter-Ocean.

Richard Carvel

Illustrated

"In breadth, massing of dramatic effect, depth of feeling, and rare wholesomeness of spirit, it has seldom, if ever, been surpassed by an American romance." — Chicago Tribune.

The Crossing

Illustrated

"A thoroughly interesting book, packed with exciting adventure and sentimental incident, yet faithful to historical fact both in detail and in spirit."

— The Dial.

The Crisis

Illustrated

"A charming love story that never loses its interest. . . . The intense political bitterness, the intense patriotism of both parties, are shown understandingly." — Evening Telegraph, Philadelphia.

Coniston

Illustrated

"A lighter, gayer spirit and a deeper, tenderer touch than Mr. Churchill has ever achieved before. . . . One of the truest and finest transcripts of modern American life thus far achieved in our fiction." — Chicago Record-Herald.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers

64-66 Fifth Avenue

New York

JACK LONDON'S SHORT STORIES

Each, cloth, illustrated, 12mo, \$1.50

The Game

A Transcript from Real Life

"It is told with such a glow of imaginative illusion, with such intense dramatic vigor, with such effective audacity of phrase, that it almost seems as if the author's appeal was to the bodily eye as much as to the inner mentality, and that the events are actually happening before the reader." — The New York Herald.

Children of the Frost

"Told with something of that same vigorous and honest manliness and indifference with which Mr. Kipling makes unbegging yet direct and unfailing appeal to the sympathy of his reader."— Richmond Despatch.

The Faith of Men

"Mr. London's art as a story-teller nowhere manifests itself more strongly than in the swift, dramatic close of his stories. There is no hesitancy or uncertainty of touch. From the start the story moves straight to the inevitable conclusion," — Courier Journal.

Moon Face

"Each of the stories is unique in its individual way, weird and uncanny, and told in Mr. London's vigorous, compelling style," — Interior.

Tales of the Fish Patrol

"That they are vividly told, hardly need be said, for Jack London is a realist as well as a writer of thrilling romances."—Cleveland Plain Dealer,

Love of Life

"Jack London is at his best with the short story . . . clear-cut, sharp, incisive, with the tang of the frost in it." — Record-Herald, Chicago.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers

64-66 Fifth Avenue

New York

RECENT WORKS BY JACK LONDON

South Sea Tales

Illustrated, decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.25 net

Jack London's Stories of the South Seas have a sense of reality about them which, even if the author were obscure and his goings and comings unknown, would prove that he had been on the ground and had himself taken part in the combats, physical and mental, which he describes. The present volume is a collection of vivid tales, which, both in their subject matter and in their setting, give the author free hand.

The Cruise of the Snark

Illustrated with over 150 halftones from photographs by the author and a frontispiece in colors

Decorated cloth, 8vo, boxed, \$2.00 net

One of the most adventurous voyages ever planned was that of Mr. Jack London's famous Snark, the little craft in which he and Mrs. London set forth to sail around the world. Mr. London has told the story in a fashion to bring out all the excitement of the cruise, its fun and exhilaration as well as its moments and days of breathless danger.

Adventure

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.50

This story is just what its title indicates — a rousing adventure tale, with lots of excitement, no little humor and considerable sentiment. While there is something doing from first to last, the reader is not conscious of that straining after effect which is evident in so many stories of rapid and exciting plot.

When God Laughs

Illustrated, decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1,50

A remarkably stirring volume into which have entered all of the elements which have gone to make its author one of the most widely read novelists of his time. To depict graphically "the struggles of strong men in a world of strong men," a reviewer once declared to be Mr. London's special province. Certainly it is the province which he has selected for himself in this book. "When God Laughs," the initial tale, deals with a novel conception of the love of man and wife. What this love is, and what it brings to pass, make a yarn which is as finished and complete a piece of work as one often finds in the much discussed short-story field.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

JAMES LANE ALLEN'S

The Doctor's Christmas Eve

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.50

"Kentucky in its rural aspects and with its noble men and women forms the scenery for this romance of quaintness and homeliness which lovingly interprets the career of a country doctor who has lost faith in life but not in ideals. Incidentally the author has interpreted the new spirit of American childhood in its relation to the miracles and legends and lore of other lands and older times, which have through the centuries gathered about the great Christmas festival of the Nativity." New York Times.

"What so many have so long hoped Mr. Allen would do he has accomplished in this work, namely, a description of Kentucky and the blue-grass farms as seen by a youngster."—New York American.

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE'S

A Certain Rich Man

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.50

"This novel has a message for to-day, and for its brilliant character drawing, and that gossipy desultory style of writing that stamps Mr. White's literary work, will earn a bigh place in fiction. It is good and clean and provides a vacation from the cares of the hour. It resembles a Chinese play, because it begins with the hero's boyhood, describes his long, busy life, and ends with his death. Its tone is often religious, never flippant, and one of its best assets is its glowing descriptions of the calm, serene beauties of nature. Its moral is that a magnate never did any real good with money." — Oregonian, Portland, Ore.

OWEN WISTER'S

Members of the Family Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.25 net

"Thrilling and unusual tales of life on the Western prairies. Mr. Wister has shown himself a master in this class of fiction." — Critic.

The Virginian

Decorated cloth, 12mo, \$1.50 net

"The vanished West is made to live again by Owen Wister in a manner which makes his book easily the best that deals with the cowboy and the cattle country. . . . It is picturesque, racy, and, above all, it is original." — The Philadelphia Press.

Lady Baltimore

Cloth, 12mo, \$1.50

"After cowboy stories innumerable, 'The Virginian' came as the last and definite word on that romantic subject in our faction. 'Lady Baltimore' will serve in much the same way as the most subty drawn picture of the old-world dignity of the vanished South."— The New York Evening Mail.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishere

64-66 Fifth Avenue

New York

By CHARLES MAJOR

Each, decorated cloth, \$1.50

The Little King

"Mr. Major's versatility is again shown in this delightful story for children, which is as unlike his 'Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall' and the other books of fiction for 'grown-ups,' that have won him such unprecedented fame as a novelist, as can well be imagined.

"That 'The Little King' will greatly increase his popularity with young people, already well established by his 'Bears of Blue River' and 'Uncle Tom Andy Bill,' there can be no doubt. The fact that those were stories of Indians and pioneers, while this is of France and historic happenings, will but widen his audience to include those to whom stories of the West would not appeal."

—Nation.

A Gentle Knight of Old Brandenburg

Mr. Major has selected a period to the romance of which other historical novelists have been singularly blind. The boyhood of Frederick the Great, and the strange wooing of his charming sister Wilhelmina, have afforded a theme rich in its revelation of human nature and full of romantic situations.

"This is one of the best books of the season. A bright light is thrown upon the queer and quaint court of King Frederick William of Prussia, and many imposing or otherwise interesting personages bow their way in these attractive pages with a courtly grace and charm that is truly of the olden time. A very enjoyable book."—New York Observer.

Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

"Dorothy is a splendid creation, a superb creature of brains, beauty, force, capacity, and passion, a riot of energy, love, and red blood. She is the fairest, fiercest, strongest, tenderest heroine that ever woke up a jaded novel reader and made him realize that life will be worth living so long as the writers of fiction create her like. . . . The story has brains, 'go,' virility, gumption, and originality." — The Boston Herald.

"'Dorothy Vernon' is refreshing not only on account of its fascinating whirl-wind of a heroine, but also because it is built on rather unusual lines. . . A story with no halting in the action, an abundance of variety; a swift, brief, engaging tale."— The Boston Herald.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Publishers 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

